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A report which attempts to correlate information about the Class of 1957 at Brooklyn College. Information is based on data from college files, questionnaires, and personal interviews. Following the progress of the class, the report covers entrance statistics, problems of freshman adjustment, evaluations of sophomores, and the results of senior interviews. Attrition, outstanding students, and curricular choices are also discussed. The conclusion offers some specific recommendations for Brooklyn College.

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BROOKLYN COLLEGE

CLASS PORTRAIT
1953-1957

by

Jeanette H. Eilenberg

ED000712

CLASS PORTRAIT 1953-57

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This study would not have been completed without the aid of many of my associates to whom I at this time offer thanks in addition to those already given. I am indebted to Dean William R. Gaede who first proposed this study and supervised it in its beginnings and to Deans Walter H. Mais and Herbert H. Stroup who gave it much encouragement. I am also obliged to the staffs of the Registrar's Office and the Office of the Dean of Students for their unfailing assistance by way of providing student records, to the administrative assistants of my own office who lightened the burden of detail work considerably, to several reliable student assistants who persevered in tallying statistics, and to my husband, Samuel Kliger, who gave the final draft of the manuscript a critical reading.

Jeanette H. Eilenberg

Assistant to the Dean of
Faculty

Brooklyn College
December 1959

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE FACELESS STUDENT

Classical mythology tells the legend of the daughters of Danaus, condemned in the Stygian underworld to pour water endlessly into leaking buckets. It is regrettable but true that a large portion of the college evaluation projects represent water poured into leaking buckets despite their high aims and their statistical impeccability. Truth can be drowned in a well, in the case of such volatile material as the human personality, college students in a well of statistics. As long as the student in his all too human complexity remains an impersonal statistic, he remains faceless, unknown really to the investigator, a mere digit in a serried rank of numbers, perched like so many swallows on a research fence of educational statistics.

No botanist would undertake to study plant growth by uprooting the plant. How then can an educational survey deal with the student except on a personal and on a developmental basis, the latter more importantly since nothing is truer than the fact that the student is constantly changing in his outlook, aims, methods of study, etc.

Recently, Professor Benjamin Wright of Smith College, without challenging the statistics yielded by a mechanically graded test, pointed out that the test scores failed to give a good index of success in college unless they were reinforced by confidential recommendations from a school head.[1] This seems a step in the right direction. Add a statement of the student's ethnic origins and cultural background, attempt an explanation of the unspoken presuppositions underlying his choice of a career and the college he is seeking to enter, and, above all, give an indication of the student's change in attitudes and basic drives, and we find outselves with a meaningful statistic, bearing some meaningful relationship to a student with a face and personality.

Stimulated by the educational prescience of Dean William R. Gaede, it seemed desirable to conduct an examination of a single class to the time of its graduation, and to get a clearer picture of the Brooklyn College student. Development, growth (and, of course, retrogression when it is to be found), from college entrance to college graduation, these were to be emphasized. The class chosen to be the subject of this survey entered in 1953 and was composed of 369 men and 489 women, all products of New York City high schools.

This is the first time that an evaluation of the social and scholastic development of a college class is based on a whole college generation, following the students through their whole college career. Questionnaires and interviews, both painstakingly compared with registrar's records and student personnel folders, provided the raw data. Questionnaires were distributed to all the members of the class that entered Brooklyn College in the Spring of 1953 at the time of their admission, and, again, at the end of the freshman and sophomore years; personnel interviews were conducted with most of the class shortly before they were graduated in June 1956 and February 1957. The survey was planned according to the following topical arrangement: 1) A picture of the class before admission; 2) Freshman problems and student adjustment; 3) How Sophomores spend their time outside of classes; 4) Student attrition; 5) The Senior and the college; 6) Scholastic achievements -- the honor students and the failures; 7) The student and the curriculum; and 8) Evaluation of the students at the end of their college careers with recommendations for the future.

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[1] The New York Times, January 30, 1957, page 31.

The collected material included data on the parents' educational background and of their professional or business occupations, as well as data on the student's birthplace, religious preference, marital status, familiarity with foreign languages heard in the home, and economic status as implied by the student's need to be entirely or partially self-supporting. How the student spends his time when not attending classes, the types of employment in which he is engaged, travel outside New York, the educational institutions he attends concurrently while also attending Brooklyn College, his reading preferences, attendance at theaters, cinemas, concerts, sporting events, museums, parties, dances, all of this information serves as a basis for the establishment of his social and intellectual attitudes.

The large percentage of students who withdraw from college before graduation is currently under discussion in educational circles. A decision was made to examine the reason for student retention and withdrawal. It was considered important to understand the reasons why students take leaves of absence, to ascertain the percentage of "drop-outs" at Brooklyn College in relation to the national norm, and to determine the connection, if any, that this problem bears to scholastic achievement and the students' social and economic background.

Also investigated was the relation between high school scholastic achievement and college scholastic achievement. What are the factors here decisive for college attainment or, contrariwise, for college failure? The shadow of one large fact falls athwart the relevant statistics: that is the fact that students are getting older. We need not be necessarily persuaded by the students' own admission during interview that "getting older" made the difference. But did it make *all* the difference? The point needs stressing because it is a leading example of how student statements elicited during interviews themselves provide guide-lines for educational measurement. The living experience is all: without life, statistics are still-born.

What do curricular preferences show? Some of the questions under discussion include the students' choice of major and electives, their vocational aims and plans for the future. Was the college succeeding in its aim in training the student to think more logically and critically, to express himself more clearly and concisely, to make him a more responsible individual, with an understanding of effective social and community relations?

This portrait of the 1953-1957 Brooklyn College generation will, it is hoped, create guide-lines for future curriculum planning and student counselling at Brooklyn College. Recently Philip E. Jacob, in his *Changing Values in College,* attempted to give a "face" to the typical American college student by presenting a profile of his values and of the influences that mold him. Is there some family resemblance between Dr. Jacob's composite student and the face of the college generation which "grew in Brooklyn"? If the influences of a large urban culture do, in fact, produce an atypical student type at Brooklyn College, and nevertheless, the Brooklyn student shows, markedly, resemblances to the national student composite, there may be universal factors at work which all educators must recognize. This study, therefore, also juxtaposes the two profiles, Brooklyn College student and the national student, in the hope of bringing to light universal criteria.

CHAPTER II

CLASS PORTRAIT -- 1953

Before a study of the social and educational development of a college class can be attempted, it is vital that the broad and basic attitudes of the students be established. Their national, ethnic, economic, and social backgrounds must be drawn, their preparatory education surveyed. There must be depicted the students' previous experiences in living which had an impact on their future development to intellectual maturity and social responsibility.

A. National, Ethnic, and Economic Backgrounds

That the members of the class under discussion are all New Yorkers and nearly all Brooklynites is not fortuitous. The Board of Higher Education stipulates that for matriculation in The College of the City of New York, a student must be "an actual and bona fide resident of the city of New York," and if under twenty-one years of age, "live in the city with parents or a guardian duly appointed by law." This makes the student bodies of the four municipal colleges far more homogeneous than those of privately endowed institutions where geographical limitations for matriculation do not exist. With few exceptions, Brooklyn College students are not only residents of the city of New York but more specifically of the borough of Brooklyn.

They live at home with their families, and travel to the campus by subway and bus. Fully aware that this situation might create the approbious epithet "subway college," Brooklyn College since its inception has by its policies tried to counteract the situation, and to disprove subtle accusations that the students are lacking in interest and understanding for a true collegiate life because their ties to the campus are more tenuous than at an out-of-town residential college.

Family life and extra-collegiate interests, no doubt, do serve to an unusual degree as distracting influences for Brooklyn College students, yet do not prevent them from experiencing much of the stimulation of campus life. The environmental factors of close family ties and the force of the great city that moulded the students from infancy and continued to do so through college must not be disregarded. For this very reason the pre-college life of the students of our study enters as a special factor. The students must be investigated not only in the light of their parental heritage, but also in their relationship to the community as a whole.

The data sheets in the personnel folders reveal that 94% of the students who registered as freshmen in the Spring semester 1953 were born in the United States and that only 6% were foreign born. This shows little deviation from the 1950 census statistics according to which 3.34% of the population of the borough of Brooklyn was born outside of the United States. A breakdown of students' birthplaces shows that of the 4_ foreign born students, 35 had their origins in Europe, five in the West Indies or South America, four in Canada, and five in Israel.

The religious affiliations of the students in our study reveal interesting data. Eighty-five per cent or 626 of the 739 students who reported on their religious faith on the data sheets were Jewish. For lack of exact pertinent data, however, it is difficult to estimate whether the religious affiliations of the students are greater or less than their proportionate number in the borough. It is assumed that less than 50% (about 38%) of the entire population of Brooklyn is Jewish whereas the fact is that Jewish students represent 84.6% of the enrollment of Brooklyn College.[1] Similarly, the Catholic (11%) and the Protestant (4%) enrollment of Brooklyn College is also not representative of the borough as a whole.

It is clear that higher education is for the Jewish group a necessary part of preparation for life, for status, for future earning ability.[2] The explanation of the gap between the Roman Catholic figures for the entire population of the Greater New York area (29.5%) and Roman Catholic attendance at Brooklyn College may be that Roman Catholic students gravitate to religious colleges. The Protestant figure for Brooklyn College is small (4%). The explanation may be found in the fact that 55% of the estimated Protestants of the city are non-white, a group which has not as yet sought, no doubt for economic reasons, higher education.[3]

The question arises as to the nativity of the students and their parents. Sixty-four per cent of the native American students in the Freshman Class of February 1953 had one or two foreign parents. Although statistics reveal more than 25 national backgrounds, the majority of the parents were of East-European and Slavic origin.

Of extreme importance to our investigation is the question of educational "exposure." By this we mean whether the parents of the students, as determinants of their children's cultural milieu, are educated and to what extent. This is especially true in the case of students who have never left the family orbit. All the students who responded to the questionnaire submitted to them in the spring of 1953 lived with their parents or relatives except five (less than 1%). Eight per cent had lost a parent or parents through death, and only 3% came from homes broken by the separation of their parents.

Without a personal acquaintanceship with the parents, the only means of determining the general cultural level of the home is through a study of the parents' educational achievements. According to statistics, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, only about 6% of the population of the United States was college bred.[4] It is, therefore, not unusual that the majority of the students who entered Brooklyn College in 1953 was going beyond the educational level of their parents. Fifteen per cent of the fathers and 5.5% of the mothers were college graduates, but in contrast, 4% of the fathers and 5.5% of the mothers had had no formal education whatsoever, i.e., had not attended primary school.[5] Eighty per cent of the fathers and 85% of the mothers had completed an elementary school education, while 43% of the fathers and 47% of the mothers furthered their schooling and graduated from high school. In this bracket, as in the percentage who completed college, it is interesting to note that the high school level reached by the parents conforms with the city norm which, according to census figures for 1950, was 48.1%. In other words, the parents are representative of the city populace at large, educationally.

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[1] Census figures do not reveal religious affiliation; figures based on church attendance are obviously misleading since not all people attend formal services.

[2] Jewish Population Trends in New York City 1940-70, published by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, 1956, pp. 4 and 6. The Federation Report asserts that in the 20-24 year age group, the Jewish rate of school attendance is virtually twice as great as non-Jewish whites. It is highly probable that the 20-24 year group is exactly the same as the collegiate 18-22 year group.

[3] Figures are from Time, January 12, 1959, p. 44.

Most of the students under discussion came from comfortable middle class homes. Fifty-three per cent of their families owned automobiles, and 90% television sets. Thirty-four per cent of the students lived in privately owned homes, and the rest, with the exception of five students who lived alone in rented rooms, occupied apartments. According to the findings of the Brooklyn College Bureau of Economic Research, the average Brooklyn College family income is above the average for the borough, $7,636 a year.[6] Although questions on the economic status of the students were not included in the questionnaires submitted to the class in 1953, personal interviews supported the figure cited by the Bureau of Economic Research. Neither the interviews nor the students' personnel folders gave evidence in more than a minimum of cases of actual financial hardship.

Statistics based on the data sheets disclosed that the majority of the fathers were engaged in white-collar occupations, and that 83% of the mothers were "housewives." About 36% of the fathers were employed in trades and crafts and 4% as transit workers. Seventeen per cent of the mothers were reported as gainfully employed (9% in business or office positions, 6% in trades and crafts, and 2% in professional occupations).

The character of the parental occupations is representative of the community at large. The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies reports[7] that Jews are heavily represented in the professions, proprietorial, managerial, and sales categories. Two-thirds of New York City's Jews are non-manually occupied compared with one-half of white non-Jews.

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[4] Ernest Havemann, They Went to College, passim.

[5] These figures do not tell the entire story. It is apparent to anyone familiar with the history of Jews of Eastern Europe that these people had some education in the old country but in Hebrew lore. Not all, when migrating to the United States, chose to take up formal elementary education in New York schools.

[6] Bulletin of Economics of the Bureau of Economic Research, Brooklyn College, Vol. XXIII (Spring, 1957), p. 18.

[7] Ibid., p. 9.

B. Educational Background of the Students

Most of the students admitted in February, 1953, to Brooklyn College had received their preparatory education in the tuition-free high schools of the city of New York, twelve in Catholic parochial high schools of Brooklyn. Only one student had attended a private institution -- Brooklyn Polytechnic Preparatory School. One student prepared in Passaic, New Jersey, and one in a foreign country.

The students who entered in February, 1953 had not only completed all the high school requirements, but had qualified for admission to Brooklyn College by including four units of English, one of American history, one of science, three of foreign language, two and a half of mathematics, and enough elective units in addition to the high school prescriptions to bring the total to four and a half.

C. Non-Academic Interests and Diversions

In order to complete the portrait of the February, 1953 freshman, it is necessary to include in the presentation of his social, educational, and economic backgrounds, a description of his non-academic interests, diversions, hobbies, recreations. These should also include his social attitudes and aspirations. Nearly all the students in the class had spent their entire pre-college lives in the city in which they were born and educated. In reply to the entrance questionnaire, 7% claimed that they had lived in foreign countries, and in nearly all cases, further inquiry proved that the places visited had been either their place of birth or the country of their parents' origin. About 5% of the students had lived for periods of a year or less, and about 5% for longer stretches of time, in various states of the Union. In the company of families and friends, 65% of the students had travelled in the United States and Canada on short vacations; 30% in the East, 18% in the South, 6% in the West, and 1% in Canada.

Since students' reading habits are a factor in their future intellectual development, it is of interest to ascertain the reading preferences of the members of the class when they entered Brooklyn College in 1953. About 20% admitted that they did not read newspapers regularly. The most frequently read newspapers in about 75% of the homes were the *New York Times* and the *Post*. Next in the order of preference were the *Daily News* in 20% of the homes, the *Daily Mirror* in 15%, the *World Telegram* in 15%, the *Brooklyn Eagle* in 9%, the *Tribune* in 9%, and the *Journal American* in 7%. Six students read the *Long Island Press*, four the *Tablet*, and one the *Daily Worker*.

Ninety-three per cent of the entering freshmen were in the habit of reading periodicals. The women preferred fashion and literary magazines, and the men news weeklies, science and sports periodicals.

In listing their reading preferences, the students put novels first. Seventy-seven per cent of the women and 60% of the men made novels their predominant choice. In fact, 20% of the women admitted that they never read critical, historical, political, or scientific works, and that other than novels, dramas and biographies were the only types of literature with which they had a wide acquaintance. This is probably a reflection of their high school teaching as well as undeveloped power of discrimination.

The men's choice of reading seemed more general than the women's. About one-third put critical works in second place after novels, and at least 80% at times read in all the categories listed in the questionnaire. Subsequent interviews with members of the class revealed that many of them included popular books commonly known as "science fiction" under the heading of scientific works.

Television and radio are established facts of modern life. It is therefore not unusual to find that there were television sets in the homes of 90% of the members of the class under discussion and that 60% of the men and 20% of the women no longer were regular radio listeners. They tuned in the radio mainly for popular and classical music while they preferred to view dramatic performances and musical shows on the television.

A great urban center like New York offers many and, in fact, a bewildering number of cultural diversions. Museums, concerts, theaters, cinemas, and lectures offer a rich fare of intellectual and cultural repast. Fifty-five per cent of the entering freshmen, however, had never attended a concert. On the other hand, 83% were in the habit of going to the theater, and all but 12 students attended motion pictures with varying degrees of frequency.

Students as a whole had not been in the habit of frequenting museums in spite of their proximity. Thirty-five entering freshmen admitted that they had never visited a museum. Besides the museums listed below, isolated students had viewed art treasures in the Frick, Guggenheim and the Egyptian Museums; at intervals, they visited the Gilbert Museum of Science, Museum of Arts and Sciences, the Museum of Science and Invention, and the Non-Objective Art Museum.

In their choice of entertainment the February, 1953 freshmen showed that they enjoyed taking part in athletics far more than in indoor games; for instance, only 10% preferred card games to athletics. The girls as well as the boys customarily watched sporting events (only 16% said that they never attended). Most of them preferred going to parties and entertaining friends at home to going to dances. (Ten per cent had never gone to a dance and only 3% had never gone to a party nor entertained at home.)

But the students had not spent all their spare time in recreational activities. They had also occupied themselves with more serious matters. They had participated in community organizations, held part-time employment in business and industry, attended educational institutions besides their high schools, and occupied positions of responsibility in high school and outside organizations.

Thirty-three per cent of the men had been actively engaged in national, religious, or philanthropic organizations, such as B'nai Brith, Catholic Youth Clubs, Jewish War Veterans, Red Cross, Polio and Multiple Sclerosis Societies, Y.M.H.A., Y.M.C.A., and Civil Defense, while 52% of the women had belonged to such organizations as Zionist Youth, B'nai Brith, Young Israel, Young Judaea, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Junior Cardiac League, Infantile Paralysis Foundation, the Infants' Home, Cerebral Palsy Society, United Baby Sitters. Both men and women had also been active in various community centers and social clubs connected with houses of worship.

The non-academic interests of the entering students is also revealed in the fact that they had assumed during their high school days leadership in various high school organizations. Presumably, they would continue in college to exert their qualities of leadership in parallel college organizations unless of course the burden of college studies precluded their participation; in either case, the capacity for leadership would be present, latent or otherwise, and our survey sought, consequently, for the evidence for the sake of throwing light on the calibre of the students with whom we are dealing. The facts showed that 50% of the men and 73% of the women had filled positions as officers in their classes, in clubs, fraternities, sororities, general organizations, student councils, and alumni groups, or had acted as leaders of Boy Scout troops, Aristas, musical bands, athletic teams, debating teams, etc.

About 13% of the men and 16% of the women (104 students) were attending outside educational institutions at the time that they entered college and continued to do so after matriculation. The schools in which most of them took courses were of two types: 1) Yeshivas and Talmudic institutions in which some were preparing to become rabbis and others teachers of Hebrew (55 students), and 2) schools of fine art (music, art, dance, drama, and radio, 31 students). Seven students were taking courses in preparatory schools in order to make up entrance conditions, one man was attending an Air Force Technical School and another United States Navy courses. The rest were part-time students at the Henry George School of Social Science, the Institution of Catholic Marriage, the Catholic Religious Confraternity, the Botanical Gardens courses, Nursing School, and various business schools.

At the time of their admission to Brooklyn College, the data sheets for the Freshmen revealed that 59% of the class had at some time previously been employed in business or industry. However, only 3% of these claimed to be self-supporting. The rest (40% of the class) held part-time positions even though it was economically not absolutely necessary that they do so. The men had found most frequently employment as office, stock, or delivery boys, or as waiters, busboys, soda dispensers, messengers, and camp counsellors. The women were most usually employed as salesgirls, clerks, counsellors, receptionists, and typists.

The students in the Freshman Class of 1953 have been portrayed as average young Americans with a varied foreign heritage. They have grown up in a great metropolis during and immediately after World War II. They have been educated in its public schools, and have been exposed to many cultural offerings. Frequently, the availability of cultural and entertainment facilities may indeed have served as distracting influences instead of as educational stimuli. Nevertheless, it seems evident that, for the most part, the students were realists who were well adjusted to the life into which they had been placed. This is evinced by their varied interests and by their willingness to assume responsibility not only as leaders in their school activities and social circles, but even more by their eagerness to seek employment in the business world despite absence of economic pressures to find gainful employment. These students are remarkably homogeneous -- they represent in all regards a cross-section of the Brooklyn community. This does not mean that to know one student is to know all. The personal interviews with each student, to be discussed later, brought out strong idiosyncratic diversity within the overall homogeneity. It appears, in fact, that college had the effect of creating more and more diversity. In other words, the students are really educated to broaden their horizons. They become less provincial, if indeed they ever were, as they progress through their four years at Brooklyn College.

CHAPTER III

FRESHMAN ADJUSTMENT - FEBRUARY 1953-1954

The first year of college is for the freshman a period of adjustment to a new approach to learning. It is the time when the realization is forced upon him that his success in college depends to a great extent on his own willingness to assume unaccustomed responsibilities. He is faced with many difficulties at the basis of which there seems to be a feeling of isolation. To a great many freshmen, the college seems to be coldly remote, a mechanism with a life of its own not only indifferent but even resentful of the student's presence on the campus. An exaggeration? Certainly! But this is what freshmen say. The good students respond to the challenge, but those whose inertia or diffidence or lack of determination prevents them from developing new attitudes are faced with difficulties with which they cannot cope unaided.

The freshman's feeling of rejection is to some extent the result of a change in educational methods from those to which he was accustomed in high school. The high school teacher does most of the work, and frequently assumes the responsibility for the achievement of the students by constant prodding and drilling. Students in secondary schools can "get by" with a minimum of preparation at home or, somehow in the educational process, rote learning becomes identified with true learning. The TV quiz programs with their emphasis on "recalled" information rather than information "assimilated" within true intellectual frameworks of reference and meaningfulness certainly did not help either. The claim has even been made that most of our students have gone through high school with no more than an infrequent, perfunctory glance at their textbooks. The usual high school assignments were perfunctorily carried out and rarely demanded much individual effort or intellectual exertion on the part of the student. As a result, the average boy or girl becomes more and more dependent on the teacher, and if unsuccessful in his studies, tends to shift the blame for his own shortcomings on the instructor's real or supposed inadequacies. College assignments require intensive study, involvement in depth with conceptual matter, often of complexity, and not a simple memorization of facts. When first confronted by these new methods of study a freshman may very well succumb to despair. He hardly understands what is demanded of him, and feels overcome by the imagined injustices that his instructors are inflicting upon him.

The high school situation is graphically presented in the statement of one of the students in the class under discussion:

> In secondary school, teachers have the tendency to do most of the work for the students. I feel that self-reliance can be and should be developed in all students at an early age. Once in college, you have to rely on yourself, and the transition from secondary school to college could be facilitated by the development of self-reliance in high school.

Although Brooklyn College at first impression may seem to be impersonal and unconcerned, this is not really the case. There is little reason for a student to feel isolated in this large municipal institution, and if this is the case, he himself is largely to blame. The administration of the college has long been aware of the gap that exists between high school and college, and has, consequently, placed great emphasis in its curriculum on the planning of the freshman year as a year of adjustment to college life in all its phases.

Since its founding in 1930, Brooklyn College has had a freshman orientation program under the auspices of the Office of the Dean of Students. The aims of the program have been to bring about a closer integration between counseling and teaching services, and to attempt thereby "to assist the Freshman in making his transition from the dependent atmosphere of the high school to the relatively independent environment of the college."[1] Most important of all, each student is assisted individually "to make progressively self-directing use of the academic, extra-curricular, and supplementary offerings of the college."[2] Through the close cooperation of members of the faculty, deficient students are referred to the proper offices for assistance. To meet these needs, a number of workshops in the area of required studies have been set up, as for instance, the Workshop on the Improvement of Reading and Study Habits where the freshman who is losing his foothold on his studies may, if he applies himself, be assisted in regaining it.

What, then, has been the result of the college's efforts as the student himself reports it? In an attempt to ascertain the impact of the Freshman Year on the class that entered Brooklyn College in February 1953, a questionnaire was sent to each student of the class registered in the Spring of 1954. The forms were returned anonymously through the mail in order to insure free and frank expression concerning student problems and reactions to the curriculum, the instructional staff, and the counseling program. More than half of the 653 students to whom questionnaires were sent, 209 women and 150 men, returned completed forms. The results revealed that in varying degrees the majority of the respondents had experienced difficulty in acclimating themselves in the new college environment. They were constructively critical of the preparation they had received in their secondary schools, the adequacy of the college counseling program, the efficacy of administrative procedures, the helpfulness of the instructors, the difficulties of curriculum, and the effect of their home and community life.

The respondents rated their freshman year in the light of their experiences in varying ways, with a marked difference in the opinions of the men and women. Twenty-two per cent (17.3% of the men and 25.3% of the women) expressed themselves as very satisfactorily adjusted and were enthusiastic about life at Brooklyn College. Fifty-three per cent (51% of men and 55% of women) felt that they were generally adjusted and were without serious objection to the way Brooklyn College is organized and planned. Seventeen per cent (18% of men and 15.2% of women) reported fair adjustment although they believed that in some important ways arrangements for freshmen in Brooklyn College could be improved significantly. Seven per cent (12% of men and 3% of women) were quite unadjusted and called for marked improvement in several areas, if Brooklyn College were to be a really valuable educational experience. Only two male students (less than 1%) took the bit in their teeth and expressed strong dissatisfaction categorically. They claimed they had gained little of value from their experience at Brooklyn College.

In order to pin-point or narrow down the question of real or imagined difficulties in making the transfer to college, the questionnaire also included a specific number of problems which would seem to present difficulties to a freshman in adjusting to college life. Each respondent was asked to check all the problems relevant to his own situation and to indicate in a space provided on the form other problems which he found difficult. The responses revealed that 14% claimed to have had no difficulties in adjustment while 15% had four or more problems to cope with.

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[1] Brooklyn College Meets its Freshmen, edited by William R. Gaede, p. 5.

[2] Ibid.

The difficulties specified by respondents related to 1) college courses, 2) personal study habits, 3) family problems and other personal situations. It is interesting to observe that the student responded differently when asked the general questions of success in adjustment and when queried on specific points. Seventy-six per cent of the respondents were critical for one or more reasons of the courses that they had taken. Thirty per cent of this group found it hard to adjust because of the large size of the classes; 40% felt that the ability of their instructors was questionable; 20% found that too much work was assigned by their teachers; 10% showed alarm at the high standards of work demanded by the college. The crowded classes of which many complained are the regrettable result of budgetary limits and increased college registration, and are part of a serious situation which cannot for the present be alleviated and which is likely in future years to become more critical. The large percentage of students, however, who had some reservations as to the competence of the instructional staff presents a problem that should be considered by the faculty as a whole. Respondents claimed that instructors were frequently "too vague" in their explanations and assignments or "too technical" to be understood by the uninitiated. In subsequent interviews with members of the class, students frequently alluded to the poor quality of teaching in the basic courses where there is the greatest need for motivating an interest in the subject matter. Several even claimed that teachers made no secret of being bored and dissatisfied with the required courses they were assigned to teach. Interesting corroboration of this charge was discovered in the students' changed attitudes to the same instructors whom they later encountered in elective courses.

Forty-five per cent of the total respondents placed the blame for their difficulty in academic adjustment on lack of study skills, on their ignorance of note-taking and on their inability to organize their work and study habits. These exemplify typical freshman problems, for the taking of independent notes and the efficient organization of study assignments are new experiences for the freshman. In order successfully to bridge the gap between high school and college, he needs the guidance and encouragement of both instructors and counselors; presumably, good will on his own part is there as the basic fact.

A small percentage of respondents mentioned other reasons for their academic difficulties. Some of these were related to inadequacies in college preparation; these included deficiency in reading, limited vocabulary, and inability to do well on examinations. It may be mentioned that part of the student criticism of instructors and courses included dissatisfaction with poor textbooks, vague assignments, overemphasis on grades and, in general, poor planning by instructors.

Seventy per cent of the total respondents had difficulties in personal adjustment, 27% of these were connected with worry about family conditions, financial problems, and health. The rest were of a psychological nature: 17% had a feeling of inadequacy socially or were unsuccessful in making friends easily; 16% felt that they had not received enough personal attention from the college, and 36% were confused concerning their personal objectives in life and, hence, found themselves floundering academically. Four per cent mentioned individual difficulties among which were lack of self-discipline, inability to concentrate, and poor study facilities or arrangements at home.

Most of the psychological difficulties which the students mention as hampering good adjustment to college were connected with a feeling of loneliness in a large institution like Brooklyn College. The friendless, socially inadequate student imagines himself to be shut out not only by his fellow students but by the college as a whole which in his belief has failed to give him personal attention.

A distinction should be drawn however. Some student confusion is rooted in character inadequacy which will probably not change, no matter what. Other irresolution does not indicate instability or capriciousness, but rather an intellectual awakening to new avenues of thought and action. When this is true, the irresolution represents a natural, new stage in the student's development and reflects a beneficial result of his early academic struggles to find himself. The passage of time tells and nowhere in our study has our conviction for the need of a developmental approach to student problems been borne out more strikingly than in this area.

Most of the difficulties encountered by the freshman have their roots in pre-college experiences either in secondary school training or in family and social relationships. The rest stem from the adequacy of the orientation he receives from the college. Therefore, an attempt was made to ascertain students' opinions on the following pertinent issues: 1) on their educational experiences in secondary school; 2) on the family and community problems that had a bearing on their adjustment to college; and 3) on the adequacy of the college counseling services responsible for their orientation.

In regard to the first, the following question was commented on by 67% of the total respondents (74% of the men and 67% of the women): "How could your secondary school have helped you more in anticipating and meeting the adjustment problems of the freshman year?" Forty-five per cent of those who answered criticized the pre-college counseling agencies in the high schools, and suggested that they be improved so that high school students can become better acquainted with the problems they will meet at college. Recommendations for raising of academic standards in secondary schools were also mentioned as a means of removing the road-blocks to college success. In this connection, the most important point made was the proposal that the senior year at high school be converted into a preparatory year for college by the introduction of academic work of a more advanced calibre. Other recommendations for the improvement of secondary schools were: that the emphasis on "true learning" rather than rote learning be increasingly stressed; that the methods of instruction be improved; that more "homework" be assigned; that more training be imparted on reading skills.

The problem of the personality, moral fibre, and tenacity of will keeps pushing itself constantly to the fore. Twenty-two per cent of the respondents were evidently aware that an increased sense of responsibility was an important asset in helping a freshman to adjust to college life, for they advised that in their cases at least, secondary schools make it one of their objectives to develop "more self-reliance" in their students.

Only forty-one per cent of the respondents (35% of the men and 46% of the women) answered that part of the questionnaire in which they were asked to "describe aspects of their home or community life that had an important bearing on their adjustment to college." More students dwelled on positive help given by family factors; fewer spoke of negative family factors. More than half of the respondents attributed a part of their successful adjustment to college to the understanding and encouragement of their families; about 10% gave credit to extracurricular activities, including fraternities, sororities and clubs, and a few acknowledged the counsel of friends who had introduced them to college ways. One student mentioned a "good home library" and another the inspiration of "working for a vocational goal" as aspects of their home and community life that had had a bearing on their freshman year in college.

Among the negative aspects that had interfered with adjustment to college, the most frequently mentioned were: the usurpation of recreational time in the home by television, the pressure of financial problems, and badgering family responsibilities. Other disturbing influences during the first year of college were religious orthodoxy in the home, competition with siblings, excessive activity in sports, and the threat of army draft.

Students' reactions were varied to a question concerning the adequacy of the college counseling services that they had received during their freshman year. Many students had received all their guidance from one individual, but since they were asked to differentiate between academic, personal, and vocational counseling, their responses will be discussed from these points of view. In 1953, each freshman was assigned to a counselor in the Office of Personnel Services for orientation. From this person he received both curricular and personal guidance and with him he frequently discussed his problems and future aims. If his problems were of a special nature, he was referred to appropriate psychological or vocational counselors, to the Placement Office, the Registrar, the Dean of Faculty or other college agencies.

The responses to the questionnaires revealed that the counseling services, the students thought, were most adequate in advising on academic problems and least adequate in personal guidance. The fact that more of the respondents (81%) reported on the greater adequacy of academic as compared with vocational and personal guidance seems to indicate that they were most aware of curricular counseling but had little opportunity to need, perhaps, to become acquainted with the other phases of guidance. This is illustrated by the fact that only 51% made observations on personal counseling. If the students who made no comments are disregarded, the figures show that the least percentage (10%) of respondents graded academic counseling as poor, that 25% found vocational guidance inadequate, and that the greatest number (40%) expressed disapproval of personal counseling. The students' disparagement of personal counseling is somewhat stringent, and in view of the fact that all freshmen had been personally interviewed by their advisers and encouraged to discuss their personal problems, difficult to explain. It is evident, however, that the students' needs had not been met, and that they felt neglected. Their need for personal understanding frequently goes beyond curricular problems and expresses itself in a desire to confide their adolescent conflicts and strivings in order to find aid in the resolution of their problems. This is also illustrated by their frequent complaints that members of the faculty are aloof and disinterested in their personal affairs.

Many freshmen offered constructive criticisms. Forty per cent of the respondents made suggestions for improvement related to problems which confront freshmen in their first year at college. They were related to registration, programming, courses, instructors, counseling, and student activities. Some of the suggestions were connected with perennial freshman complaints -- elimination of late afternoon hours, earlier registration, curtailed programs, fewer prescribed courses, less registration confusion, less homework, liberalization of prerequisites for courses, abolition of physical education requirements, and greater social integration between freshmen and upper classmen. The greatest number of suggestions, however, were for improvement in the area of counseling -- for "more counseling on an intimate basis," for smaller groups of students at first meetings with advisers, and for increased aid in program planning.

During their first year at college the freshmen had undergone their "ordeal by fire," and most of them had successfully completed the transition between high school and college. Probably their most valuable experiences for the future had been the realization that they had to assume responsibility for their own accomplishments and that success at college demanded concentration on studies and wide-ranging intellectual curiosity. It must be admitted that the whole problem of student "complaints" remains a puzzle. It may indeed be true that both high school counseling and college freshman counseling leave much room for improvement. Counselors, working conscientiously at their assignments, would be strange not to seek for means to alleviate the student's pains of growing up to increased responsibilities. But the puzzle remains how to distinguish between character spinelessness, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the "natural," so to speak, perturbation of the student who sees with more or less clarity that his despondency is itself the challenge of college and of the promise of success in life awaiting him after his college days are completed, that the urgency of the new need to a rigorous self-examination, intellectually and in terms of character, is precisely what college is all about. In fact, a good Darwinian case could be argued -- even more severe measures should be adopted to compel a more thorough self-examination on the part of each student. Perhaps we are after all sentimentalizing the whole problem of the student's need for more and more personal counseling and, as a result, we cripple the student (and the citizen later) instead of aiding him. Happily, as we have already indicated, the freshman student in a significant number of cases does grow up and a survival of the fittest does take place with or without extensive counseling aid.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOPHOMORE - THE MIDSTREAM OF COLLEGE, 1954

The first questionnaire given to entering Freshmen attempted a portrait of the student as he was, prior to and at the point of entering college. Questionnaires were again sent out in the fall of 1954 when the students were at the point of completing their sophomore year. The attempt this time was to discover why they had chosen to attend Brooklyn College, how they spent their time when not attending classes, and most importantly of all, whether in their estimation the college was living up to their expectations. The questionnaires were delivered by mail to the 556 members of the original class who were at that time registered in the School of Liberal Arts. Three hundred and forty students, 140 men and 200 women (61%), responded.

A. Why They Went to College

The student answers gave the impression that they had no clear idea of their purpose for embarking on a college education except as a means of achieving higher economic and social status and as a preparation for vocational goals. In stating their reasons for choosing to come to Brooklyn College, the majority (60%) were disappointingly vague. A few claimed that they had not given the problem thought, and the rest of the respondents in this group replied that their purpose was "to get a liberal education," to improve "my economic status," "to find a vocation of some kind," or "to get a degree." Thirty per cent of the respondents associated their aims with their vocational goals, the majority of these (two-thirds) with teaching, and the rest with social work, speech therapy, accounting, home economics, and the theater. Ten per cent of the respondents (all but two were men) said that they had come to college in order to prepare for graduate schools in engineering, dentistry, law, and medicine.

Although their purpose in coming to college seemed ill-defined, 74% of the students believed that the course of study offered to them at Brooklyn College met their requirements. About 10% were uncertain and 16% believed it had failed to fulfill their expectations. Diverse reasons, most of which were related to the curriculum, were given for this failure. The dissatisfied students attributed the non-success of the college curriculum to "too many required courses" and to the reverse, "there is too much specialization." Some were "dissatisfied with courses" and instructors. Other respondents were unsure and felt "it was too soon to tell" and a few were self-critical enough to place the blame for their inability to fulfill their aims at Brooklyn College on their own attitudes and indecisions.

Although their reasons for coming to college may have been indefinite, their vocational goals were quite well defined. By the end of the sophomore year, 87% had decided on a future field of vocational activity in which they believed Brooklyn College was successfully guiding them and for which it was offering adequate preparation. The men named 20 occupations that they were preparing to enter. Law, teaching, engineering, accounting, medicine, and dentistry headed the list. The other fields mentioned by the respondents were: advertising, biology, biochemistry, chemistry, business, economics, music, psychology, and traffic-managing. Seventy-one per cent of the women who responded to the questionnaire had chosen teaching as their future career. Other occupations that they planned to pursue were in the fields of art, biology, chemistry, business, copywriting, dietetics, government administration, home economics, language interpreting, library, law, merchandising, music, medicine, personnel work, psychological research, social work and musical, physical, and speech therapy.

B. Co-Curricular Activities

The respondents' extra- and co-curricular activities may be discussed under several headings: employment, attendance at other educational institutions, travel, diversions, and sports. Since their outside interests at the time of their admission to Brooklyn College have already been the subject of examination, it is only necessary to point out changes in forms of activity that were effected during the first two years at college.

Statistics show an increase of one-third in the total number of students employed during some part of the year from the time of admission to the end of 1954. Fifty-nine per cent of the students had been engaged in employment in business or industry at various times during their high school years. At the end of the sophomore year, 60% of the students were working part-time during the school year and 93% were gainfully employed during the summer. Sixty-two per cent held full-time positions during the summer vacation while 31% spent only part of their time working and devoted the rest to other interests, most frequently to attending summer schools in New York City.

Since 50% of the students attended summer schools, this number necessarily includes not only part-time workers and nonworkers but also full-time workers. (It is not at all unusual for Brooklyn College students to take four or five credits in the evening after a full day in business.) Most of the students attended Brooklyn College in the summer, probably for financial reasons and because of employment opportunities available in the city. Seven per cent of the total students, however, attended colleges out-of-town in Vermont, Minnesota, Miami, and California.

In February, 1953, 13% of the students (9% of the men and 16% of the women) attended institutions of learning besides Brooklyn College during the regular school year. During 1954, the total had decreased to 11%; but the decrease was only in the percentage of men students which had fallen to 5% while the number of women students who carried on studies in outside schools had actually increased to 17%. The institution that the respondents attended were the same as at the time of admission with the addition of the summer schools already named. It is understandable that students so occupied with studies and business positions should have little time left over for vacation travel. In the summer of 1954, less than a third of the students took short trips of two weeks or less in the eastern states, and only 7% travelled for longer periods of time to Europe, Mexico, the South, and the West.

The responses to the questionnaire do not reveal much improvement in the students' reading habits. Only nine men and nine women admitted that they read nothing outside of their college assignments, but they read less than at the time they entered Brooklyn College in all categories of reading matter.

A comparison between the frequency of attendance at motion pictures, theaters, concerts, sporting events and operas at the time of admission to Brooklyn College and the end of the sophomore year reveals that attendance at all these types of amusement except the cinema had decreased. With few exceptions students continued to view movies about twice a month or less. Before 1953, 60% of the respondents attended concerts about one to three times a year, and none attended more than 15 times a year. In 1954, only 44% attended the theater one to five times a year, although six students were in the habit of going to concerts as often as 15 to 55 times a year. The frequency of attendance in the diversions decreased as follows: at operas it fell from 45% of the students one to three times a year in pre-college days to 30% about twice a year; at theater, it lessened from 80% of students about four times a year to 50% one to three times a year; and at sporting events, it diminished from 82% of students four to five times a year to 72% about three times a year.

The students' social lives had undergone little change. They continued occasionally to go to dances and parties. Most of the girls frequently entertained their friends at home, and dated members of the opposite sex. (Only five of the men and three of the women admitted that they never dated.) In the fall of 1954, eight women and three men in the class were married, and one man and 20 women had announced their engagements.

The students were active in a number of Brooklyn College social organizations, mainly in houseplans. Eleven per cent belonged to sororities and fraternities, 28% to religious organizations, and 6% took an active part in dramatics. The students participated in 30 different sports, the men mainly in basketball, baseball, football, handball, softball, and swimming while the women most often took part in basketball, iceskating, swimming, tennis, and volleyball.

By the end of the sophomore year, most of the students seemed to be quite well adjusted to the college. Those who had survived[1] had become good "citizens" of the college community. The more mature and responsible were aware that success in their studies demanded the application of all their faculties and while it might be possible to get by with a minimum of study this was not enough for the serious student who was striving to reach higher intellectual and vocational goals. This probably accounts for the decrease in attendance at theaters, operas, concerts, and sporting events, and in the amount of outside reading, and illustrates a growing realization of their obligations to their studies. By expressing more independent judgment and more articulately than before, they were manifesting a new maturity in meeting problems not only at college, but in the world outside.

Whether the students' willingness to obtain outside part-time employment is also an indication of student maturity is a question difficult to answer. If the student seeks to earn money when it is desperately needed by the family, thereby neglecting his studies, the one thing which is certain is that the student will soon appear as a statistic among the "dropouts"; a possible remedy is increased financial aid by the college. On the one hand, family pressure may not exist: in fact, many students readily admit that they seek part-time employment to defray expenses for luxuries such as cashmere sweaters. It is doubtful whether the student has debated with himself whether he can safely engage in part-time work and maintain college standards. On the other hand, we may also encounter the case of a student in full maturity, subjected to family economic pressures, who displays his maturity in his very determination to maintain college standards while employed outside. In other words, at every point of our investigation, we discover the essential soundness of our hypothesis that all aspects of student and academic problems interlock: the isolated statistic, accurate enough as a discrete statistic, actually obscures instead of revealing the truth of student life. In short, given a statistic, the correct answer is: it all depends. Conclusions are apodictic when they are resolved from the general and constantly changing facts of student behavior.

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[1] The following chapter will contain statistics on the students who discontinued attendance at college before graduation.

CHAPTER V

FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE -- RETENTION AND WITHDRAWAL, 1953-57

The fact that more than half of the students admitted to American colleges are never graduated presents a shocking picture of educational wastefulness. All agree that the situation should be remedied; steps have been taken, but much more must be accomplished in the way of improvement. The student cannot, after all, be prevented from terminating his college career -- college is not a concentration camp. But an uncovering of the student's motives and a constructive attempt to help him to meet his problems may dissuade him from his purpose and help him to persevere. It is, therefore, very important to determine the actual reasons for withdrawal from college and the possible means that the college can undertake to increase the retention of students in institutions of higher learning.

As is to be expected, the problem of students' withdrawal from college has long been a subject of interest and of extensive research in the educational world. Most recently two reports have appeared: a detailed study of focusing on adult education problems entitled Why Students Drop Out was undertaken by James T. Carey under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults and in July 1956 the second study entitled A Study of College Student Retention and Withdrawal was published by Robert E. Iffert of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington, D.C. This second report is based on responses from students entering as full-time freshmen in the fall of 1950 in 177 selected institutions. The Office of Education and the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers were associated with Iffert in the report.[1]

The Administrative Office of the Board of Higher Education of the City of New York is also concerned with the problem of student mortality in the city colleges, and has suggested an evaluation of this situation in the municipal institutions under its jurisdiction. A study was undertaken of the reasons for student withdrawal at Brooklyn in the hope that light would be shed on the problem leading to constructive recommendations for improvement. Two main lines of research were followed: 1) a comparison with the national norms of the percentage of Brooklyn College students who dropped; and 2) a comparison of the reasons offered by withdrawing students in the nation as a whole with the reasons offered by Brooklyn College students.

A. A Comparison of the Number of Drop-Outs in the Class Admitted in February 1953 and in the Nation as a Whole

The students who withdrew from college before graduation fall into three categories: 1) students who took formal leaves of absence during the semester, herein designated as L/A's; 2) students who did not take formal leaves, but who failed to reregister after the completion of a semester, herein named NR's; and

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[1] Robert E. Iffert, Study of College Student Retention and Withdrawal, reprinted from College and University, July, 1956, p. 136.

3) students who left but re-registered in the School of General Studies instead of the College of Liberal Arts after the termination of a semester, herein called SGS's.

Since the LOA's applied to leave college before the end of the semester, they were, whenever possible, interviewed by a counselor in the Office of the Dean of Students. Counseling records concerning reasons for withdrawal of students are usually available in the students' personnel folders. In the cases of students in the NR category, on the other hand, such records were not available except for students dismissed for low scholarship, in which case a dismissal record revealed the true state of affairs. These students left without explanation after the end of the semester, and any information concerning their reasons for not continuing their studies at Brooklyn College had to be obtained through communications after their withdrawal. At the beginning of each semester after admission, therefore, questionnaires were sent to all members of the original class of February 1953 who had not taken formal leaves of absence, yet had failed to register at the college after the completion of the preceding semester. The majority of non-registrants responded to the questionnaires with the exception of those who had moved from New York without leaving a forwarding address, or those who through lack of interest failed to reply even after a second or third communication.

A discussion of the problem of withdrawal from college before graduation must necessarily be introducted by registration statistics. The following tables are a complete summary of such figures for the class under discussion from the time of admission in 1953 to the year of normal graduation in 1957. Each figure in the tables includes the total number of students in each category. The number of students who dropped out temporarily (for one or two semesters) from the College of Liberal Arts and who then returned are included in the total figures of registrants and non-registrants, and are not denoted specifically. They are, however, indicated in the number of students whose graduation was delayed and who were registered as juniors or seniors in the college after the main body of the class had graduated in February 1957.

Table I

Registration Statistics for Class That Entered Brooklyn College in February 1953
Student Retention Until Graduation

	Men Total Registered --- 369 100% Total Graduated --- 151 41%				Women Total Registered --- 489 100% Total Graduated --- 278 57%			
Term	No. Reg.	% of Total	No. Grad.	% of Total	No. Reg.	% of Total	No. Grad.	% of Total
Spring'53	369	100			489	100		
Fall '53	294	79			405	83		
Spring'54	264	71			365	75		
Fall'54	221	60			335	69		
Spring'55	196	53			320	65		
Fall'55	180	49			298	61		
Spring'56	179	49			290	60	3	1
Fall'56	138	37	27(a)	7	231	47	64	13
Spring'57	59	14	85(b)	23	29	6	189(b)	39
Fall'57	10	3	39	11	7	1	22	4

(a) 16 men and 54 women were graduated June 1956; 11 men and 10 women were graduated September 1956.

(b) 85 men and 187 women were graduated February 1957; one woman was graduated in absentia, one died February 1957.

Table II

Registration Statistics for Class That Entered Brooklyn College in February 1953
Student Attrition Before Graduation

	Men			Women		
	Total Registration --- 369 100% Total Attrition - 208 56%			Total Registration --- 489 100% Total Attrition - 204 42%		
Term	No. LOA	No. NR	No. SGS	No. LOA	No. NR.	No. SGS
Fall 1953	36	33	6	30	33	21
Spring 1954	43	44	18	46	43	35
Fall 1954	45	75	28	55	66	32
Spring 1955	48	101	24	56	83	30
Fall 1955	49	114	26	59	103	29
Spring 1956	49	111	30	62	110	24
Fall 1956	50	126	27	64	121	16
Spring 1957	52	131	24	65	123	16
Fall 1957	52	132[a]	24[b]	65	123[a]	16[c]

[a] Includes: 1) 29 men who transferred to professional schools -- 27 to engineering, one to law, one to dental; 2) 29 men dismissed for poor scholarship (a total of 62 men from this class was dismissed between 1953 and 1957); 3) 16 women dismissed for poor scholarship (a total of 22 women was dismissed between 1953 and 1957); and 4) one student who died.

[b] Includes: 15 men who were dismissed from CLAS for poor scholarship and who transferred to SGS. (Altogether, 33 men were dismissed for low scholarship from CLAS during 1953-1957 and registered as non-matriculants in SGS. Three of these were graduated AAS in June 1956, three were readmitted to CLAS after raising their academic indices, nine dropped out of their own accord, and three were again dismissed for low scholarship from SGS.)

[c] Includes: Three women who were dismissed from CLAS for poor scholarship and who transferred to SGS. (Altogether, six were dismissed for low scholarship from CLAS and registered as non-matriculants in SGS. Two of these were dropped for low scholarship from SGS, and one dropped out again of her own accord.

The figures indicated in the registration tables take on additional meaning when they are compared with the national figures presented in the report from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. According to these statistics, the national retention figure, 43.7%, denotes the total number of students who were graduated from American colleges, but actually only 38.6% of the total students graduated "from the institution of first registration in regular progression (four years or less)." About 5% of the students who were included in the 43.7% retention figure belonged to a "miscellaneous group made up of students who changed from full-time to part-time status and dropped out temporarily -- so that credits were lost and graduation delayed."[2]

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 439.

In comparison with these figures, a 52% retention figure for Brooklyn College represents both the students who were graduated after four years (42.9% of the total students) and the students still registered in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences of Brooklyn College in the Fall of 1957 (9.1%). It is, therefore, fair to match the 38.6% national retention figure with the 42.9% Brooklyn figure.[3] The difference between the percentage of students who graduated from the institution of first registration after four years in the United States and at Brooklyn is thus 4.2%.

The national retention figure is based on reports from 177 institutions of two general types, privately endowed colleges and publicly controlled four year colleges. It should, therefore, be of interest to compare the percentage of student withdrawals in the Brooklyn College class with the percentages in each of the two types named above.

Brooklyn College is a municipally controlled institution and, consequently, might be expected to conform more closely in the pattern of its student body to publicly controlled rather than to privately controlled colleges. A comparison of the percentage of drop-outs, however, reveals that, contrary to expectation, the percentage of students at Brooklyn College who did not achieve graduation is closer to the non-graduation figure of privately endowed than to that of publicly controlled four year institutions. Although the total Brooklyn College non-graduation figure is below the national norm, it is 3.7% greater than the comparable percentage for privately endowed colleges and 10.4% less than that for publicly controlled institutions. If it is true, as some say, that one does not appreciate what one does not pay for (tuition rates at public institutions are decidedly lower) this assumption is disproved by these statistics. Brooklyn College, apparently, succeeds in retaining students at higher rates than other comparable public colleges.

B. The Reasons Why Students Dropped Out

If the retention figure at American colleges is to be raised, students' motives for withdrawing from college must be clearly understood. The determination of exact reasons, however, presents inherent difficulties since conclusions usually are based, as they must, on the students' own explanations for leaving college. Without suggesting that the students' reasons are false, it frequently becomes apparent that, as part of their confusion, bewilderment, or disappointment with themselves, a real reason for withdrawing lies behind the reasons which they offer. At the time when students are required to explain their motives, they may resort to subterfuges because of psychological stress, the result of either an inability or an unwillingness to express themselves frankly. It is fair, therefore, to postulate that more than one reason motivates each withdrawal from college. We are really dealing, then, with a general reason that can be publicly stated without too much personal involvement, and an underlying reason or reasons that might preferably be left undisclosed and that can perhaps be inferred through an analysis of available personal data.

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[3] According to the national figures, 61.4% failed to graduate four years after admission. Therefore, 38.6% were retained. *Ibid.*, p. 439. This study made no attempt to discover what percentage of drop-out students who "migrated" to a second college subsequently were graduated.

The greatest student mortality in the class under discussion and in the nation as a whole occurred during the first year, when about half of the total students who were to drop out before graduation did withdraw. It is also noteworthy that 78% of the total number of formal leaves of absence were granted to members of the class during the spring and fall semesters in 1954, but only 35% of the total cases of non-registration after the end of a semester had occurred by the beginning of the third semester. This leads to the assumption that leaves of absence are related to freshman adjustment problems and for this reason, leaves of absence granted during the first year will be discussed separately, before the total analysis of reasons for withdrawal from college is presented.

An examination of the reasons given by freshmen who took the step to leave college before the end of their first or second semesters disclosed personal emergencies, indecision, and inability to cope with academic requirements. Emergencies, originating in the home, in business reverses or unemployment of a parent or in the illness within the family, motivated the withdrawal from college of 27.5% of the male LOA's and of 50% of the women in this group. Such exigencies made it necessary for the student to give up his educational plans either by becoming self-supporting or by helping in some other way. Besides financial and personal emergencies, the reasons most frequently assigned by LOA's in the freshman year were "health" and "discouragement with poor scholarship." Twenty-two per cent of the men frankly attributed their inability to remain in college to their "waning interest in their studies" and to their inability to meet the academic standards of the college successfully. It is of interest to note, however, that only 3% of the women admitted that they were dropping out because of dissatisfaction with their academic achievements, but that 25% claimed illness as the reason for the request of leave of absence.

The disparities in the figures at once create doubt in the mind of the counselor. Were one quarter of the women and only 3% of the men in the group of freshmen who took leaves of absence compelled to withdraw from college because of illness? Why did 22% of the men and only 3% of the women admit that they were leaving college because they would be unable to succeed in their studies? Our misgivings are borne out by the scholastic weaknesses of some of the women in this group, and it is this fact that leads one to suspect that the stated excuse of illness on the part of the girls is not always the real explanation.

An example of the disparity between what actually happened and what the student reported is the case of a girl who applied for a leave of absence during her first term at college for economic reasons. She had realized even before admission that the odds were against her, but had hoped to overcome them. Her high school average had been low. Soon she found that the academic requirements of college were much more stringent than she had expected, and that it would either not be possible or not worth the necessary effort to cope with them while holding a part-time position in business. Overwhelmed by her problem, she wisely applied for a leave before her grades showed the effect of her struggle, but, and here is the clue, she claimed financial difficulties as the reason.

The remaining 22% of LOA's departed during semesters following their freshman year, and again there may be some reservation in the counselor's mind as to the real reason and the stated reason for their withdrawal. In any event, the record shows a slight increase in financial, personal, and family reasons.

The LOA's, however, comprised only about one-fourth of the students who withdrew from the class under discussion. The rest (255 students) did not take formal leaves of absence, and belonged to the group which has been denoted as "non-registrants," and which included 45 students dropped for poor scholarship by the college administration. The questionnaires that these drop-outs received asked them to indicate the most important factor in their decision not to register and also any other reason that motivated their withdrawal from the college. The responses revealed that 33% had transferred to other institutions, that 23% had left college because of personal problems, including illness and financial difficulties, 12% because of marriage, 13% because of admission to armed forces. The rest mentioned discouragement and change of plans as reasons for dropping out.

The secondary reasons for discontinuing attendance at college indicated by the non-registrants helped to clarify their motivations. Most of the students who had transferred to other institutions had attended Brooklyn College as a preparatory school for specialized study which they intended to pursue in schools of agriculture, art, engineering or pharmacy, but other respondents did not explain explicitly their decision to transfer to another institution, and simply attributed it to a change in plans. The institutions to which they transferred were: Alfred College, Barnard College, Columbia School of Pharmacy, Cornell Agricultural College, City College, Cortland College, Cooper Union Institute, Hofstra College, La Salle Institute, Lowell School of Technology, Madison Business College, University of Miami, Mount Sinai Nursing School, New York University, and Yeshiva College. One student who had indicated financial problems as the primary reason for not registering subsequently entered the army, while another who attributed his withdrawal from college to "loss of interest and discouragement" gave his economic situation as secondary reason. "Waning interest in the college program" caused one respondent to enlist in the army and another to transfer to an institution more to his liking.

The clearest fact which stands out in the question of student retention and withdrawal is the compelling necessity for drawing a distinction between the LOA (the student who dutifully appears to fill out his form and to state his reason for withdrawal) and the non-registrant (the student who departs, generally at semester's end, leaving no word as to his future intentions and plans). The issue is badly confused if the distinction is not drawn. In our study, 212 of a group of 255 non-registrants responded. One significant figure leaped to the eye: one third had transferred to other colleges. Thus the problem of middle of the term withdrawal is exposed more nakedly. Those who leave in the middle of the term (almost entirely freshmen) do not usually re-register and make a fresh start elsewhere. This is not tantamount to saying that we should be content that students who withdraw after the freshman year more often tend to re-register elsewhere: there is academic and administrative waste in this too. The facts of the case do clearly tell us, however, that the freshman year is the decisive year for our institutions of higher learning as a whole if we wish to avoid the shocking waste of collegiate investment and teaching talent by freshmen who either will not, or can not (our aim is to discover which is truer: will not or can not) take advantage of their precious opportunity.

Table III

Total Withdrawals From College Before Graduation and Years of Withdrawal

Year of Withdrawal	National Percentage	B.C. Per Cent
Total percentage of withdrawals at end of first year	27.6%	26.7%
Total at end of second year	42.6%	39.7%
Total at end of fourth year	56.3%	48.0%

The equivocal character of the reasons assigned for withdrawing from college and the possibility that academic difficulties are the actual bases for many of these withdrawals has been suggested. The responses to the national questionnaire caused Robert Iffert to conclude that the reasons for withdrawal from college were dual in nature, and that few students attributed their leaving to a single factor. According to the national findings, "two types of difficulties, academic and financial, dominated the scene."[4] The minor reasons mentioned in the Iffert Report were the effect of the selective service act, the increased marriage rate among college students, transfers to other colleges and professional schools, and difficulties of a psychological nature.[5] It is impossible to fathom completely the causes for students' withdrawal from Brooklyn College before graduation, but a more precise understanding can be gained through further research. A study of the scholastic records and of the high school standing of the drop-outs should throw further light on the problem under consideration.

The record is clear and plain: the withdrawals came overwhelmingly from low scholarship students and from the lower echelons of those admitted to Brooklyn College. A study of the college records of the Brooklyn students who withdrew before graduation revealed that the grades of an astonishingly large percentage were below "C" average at the time that they discontinued attendance, and had entered college with the lowest high school averages.

Table IV

Standing of Drop-Outs in Class Admitted February 1953 at the Time They Withdrew From College

Grade Deviation During Term of Withdrawal*	LOA's	NR's	SGS's
% with + deviation	25.6%	41.9%	15. %
% with - deviation	51.2%	51.0%	67.5%
"C" average	23.2%	7.1%	17.5%

*In administrative terminology "plus deviation" means "above 'C' average," "minus deviation" means "below 'C' average."

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 442.

[5] *Ibid.*, passim.

If we correlate these figures with the reasons given for withdrawing from college, an interesting inference can be drawn. Although 51% of the students who took formal leaves of absence had college averages below "C", very few (only 21% of the men and 3% of the women), gave poor scholarship as their primary reason for leaving college. The low grades earned by this group may very well have been caused by pressing personal or financial difficulties which prevented them from concentrating their efforts wholeheartedly on their studies. But the reverse may also have been the case, that their failure to achieve success in their studies may have been the underlying cause of the "lack of interest in college," or the "discouragement," of the "desire to change plans," or even of the psychological and physical illnesses that they recorded as reasons for discontinuing their studies.

The scholarship of the NR's, the students who left after the completion of a semester, was of a higher calibre[6] than that of the LOA's who surrendered hope of successfully passing their courses before the end of the term. In comparison with 25.6% of the LOA's, 41.9% of the NR's had better than "C" averages. An equal percentage of students in the LOA and NR groups, however, had below "C" averages; but it is interesting to note in this connection that the latter group included dismissals because of low scholarship[7] and some students who failed to respond to the questionnaire, and whose withdrawal from college remains unexplained.

The group of drop-outs with the lowest scholastic standing was composed of students who had transferred from the College of Liberal Arts to the School of General Studies. They had the lowest averages in both high school and college. Since 40% of these students had been dismissed for low scholarship from the School of Liberal Arts, the School of General Studies drop-outs will be the subject of further discussion under the heading of "Success and Failure" (Chapter VII).

When we compare the high school standing of the students who withdrew from college with that of the total class, we find that 70% of the drop-outs entered with high school averages below 85% (19.5% of these with high school averages below 80%), and that only 7.2% had entrance averages of 90% or over. This holds true for all categories: 66.4% of the LOA's, 67.2% of the non-registrants, and 77.5% of the SGS group had high school averages below 85%. The group of students in the class who had transferred from the School of Liberal Arts to the School of General Studies had the poorest high school records; only one (2.5%) of these students had an average of 90% or over, while 45% had averages between 80% and 84%, and 32% had entered college with high school grades that fell below 80%.

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[6] This was in spite of the fact that the NR's included 18% of the total students dismissed for low scholarship from the School of Liberal Arts.

[7] Cf., supra, p. 21, Student Attrition, notes "a" and "c".

[8] Some of these students had received "H" or "F" for administrative reasons, for excessive absences or failure to take final examinations.

C. Conclusions

A study of the retention problem in the class that entered Brooklyn College in the spring of 1953 in comparison with the national situation shows general similarities. The retention figure at Brooklyn College deviates favorably from that of the publicly endowed colleges throughout the nation, but is slightly lower than that of privately endowed institutions. An analysis of the total reasons for withdrawal from college before graduation and of students' scholastic and cultural backgrounds revealed a predominance of academic difficulties. Since 78% of the students who took leaves of absence did so during the first year, their scholastic incompetence can be attributed to the difficulties with which they were confronted in the freshman year. These in turn were caused by inadequacies in students' educational preparation or in their personal attitudes, in their lack of strength of purpose, and in their inability and/or unwillingness to adjust their personalities to the demands made upon them by the college. Suggestions for remedying inadequacies in preparation have recently been made in a Ford Study, They Went to College Early, and in Paul Woodring's A Fourth of a Nation, but the immeasurable qualities that frequently give even the poorly endowed student the stamina to complete his college education successfully are ultimately the determining qualities that will prevent withdrawal from college in spite of personal and financial exigencies.

No doubt, proposals for remedying the severe problems of academic withdrawal cannot be offered until we have completed our study. Still, some evidence is in and at least the general outlines of a positive attack on the problem are discernible. First and foremost is scholarship. Withdrawals will dwindle as the poorer students are sternly denied admission. We must face the unvarnished fact: if the poorer student is admitted, he will soon drop out of his own accord. No business can be conducted successfully following wasteful procedures. College administrators are faced with a similar problem.

As far as financial causation of withdrawal is concerned, student loans offer a remedy. Yet, the problem has a double face. For one, the able student rallies under financial pressure and is spurred on to even higher scholastic achievement. Secondly, the financial cause runs very deep and students themselves point out that when the principal wage-earner suffers a heart attack, there is no student loan large enough to support the whole family, for it is indeed the whole family and not one student who needs support.

CHAPTER VI

STUDENTS AT CLOSER VIEW - THE UPPER CLASSMEN EVALUATE AND ARE EVALUATED, 1956 - 1957

It has been the purpose of this study to endow the "faceless" Brooklyn College student with recognizable human features by rescuing him from an engulfing sea of statistics. Up to this point, however, it must be admitted that this has not been entirely accomplished. Most of the data obtained for the background of this survey has of necessity been derived from personnel folders, registrar's records, and questionnaires, a method of research that has its limitations. Purely factual data related to registration figures, curricula, or to students' ethnic, national, and educational backgrounds are obtained with ease and accuracy from direct responses to carefully worded questionnaires. But when this method is applied to obtain expressions of opinion concerning the curriculum, the college, the students' social-educational attitudes, and choice of goals, the impersonal questionnaire often leaves much to be desired in the way of answers. Because of apathy, carelessness, or lack of time, responses to such non-factual questions are frequently found to be incomplete or irrelevant and sometimes even flippant. In general, the most adequate responses are written by the conscientious, the articulate, or, contrariwise, the dissatisfied. These people have things to say. The rest of the responses are expressed in vague, diffuse, or ambiguous terms and leave the impression that the respondent is either avoiding commitment or is giving little thought to his answers.

Another method of obtaining the information necessary for tracing the features of the typical student is the *personal interview in depth*, a method which presents its own hazards. An interviewer who lacks objectivity, who sets out to prove a preconceived hypothesis, will not succeed in producing a true picture of the situation. The directness of the questionnaire is indeed preferable to the oblique questions of the biased interviewer. But to the extent that every effort was made in the following personal oral interviews in depth to avoid bias and leading questions, the results have been worth the effort. The interviewer must, in any case, judge for himself whether the student is not being as frank as he should be, out of fear to offend -- or whether the student is too sophisticated altogether, answering not truthfully but to give the response which he thinks it is politic to give.

In order to complete the portrait of the class that entered Brooklyn College in 1953, it was, therefore, believed necessary to interview, searchingly, as many members of the class as possible. In this manner, the inarticulate and the indolent could be reached, and the articulate and the conscientious could be given the opportunity to express themselves more fully in certain areas. With this purpose in mind, students in the class under discussion who were registered as upper seniors were invited to make appointments for interviews in the spring and fall of 1956. In the spring of 1957, the same procedure was applied to the remaining members of the group who were candidates for graduation. All but 10% of the total seniors replied by making appointments for conferences.

The excellent response can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the call came from the Office of the Dean of Faculty. An unexpected result was that the call caused some students, who for inexplicable reasons feared their graduation might be in jeopardy, to feel a certain amount of trepidation. Needless to say, such anxious respondents were promptly reassured and assuaged by a tactful receptionist, and were usually gratified to learn of the benign purpose of the interview. Many even seemed to be very pleased that they had been called upon to discuss their reactions to the college from which they were about to graduate. The facts that the responses would be treated anonymously and that none would become part of the students' permanent personnel records were stressed. Furthermore, the respondents were encouraged to be as frank and truthful as possible, and they were given the assurance that their criticisms would be received objectively and treated as entirely "off the record."

Each interview was approximately fifteen minutes or longer in duration, with questions directed to the following areas: 1) How have you been spending your spare time during your years of attendance at Brooklyn College? 2) Why did you choose to study at Brooklyn College in preference to other institutions? 3) What are your aims, ambitions, plans for the future? 4) In what way, if any, has Brooklyn College affected your development? 5) Has Brooklyn College carried out its specific aims in providing you with a liberal education? The first two questions were planned to amplify earlier impressions and to clarify ambiguities revealed in the answers to the questionnaires that had been sent to the students in previous years. In the third, fourth, and fifth areas, questions were planned to lead to discussions, to probe the respondents' attitudes, and to induce them to give frank opinions.

It soon became evident that each of the three groups of seniors interviewed during three semesters, spring 1956, fall 1956, and spring 1957, represented distinctive characteristics, and should therefore be discussed separately. The first group of students had accelerated its studies and graduated in three and a half years, while the last group had delayed its graduation beyond the normal four years; the second group progressed at the normal rate of four years. That each group consequently represents different attitudes toward its studies and college life in general is to be expected.

A. The Three and One Half Year Group

The students in the group that was interviewed in the spring of 1956 may be said to have been characterized by "purposefulness." Their successful completion of a four year course of study in three and a half years indicated their possession of a clear-sighted view of their future goals and sufficient stamina to reach them. This was borne out not only by the excellence of their scholarship but also by their preparatory plans for the years to come. Since the "purposefulness" of the men, however, frequently manifested itself in a different form from that of the women, separate discussion is called for.

A serious attitude toward scholarship was evinced by the above-average grades achieved by the 21 men in this group who were interviewed.[1] Six of them had never fallen below a C average, and all of them intended to continue their studies in graduate schools. Six of the men had been successful in obtaining admission to medical schools, and the others intended to continue their studies in Europe, Puerto Rico, The New York University Institute of Fine Arts, The Jewish Institute of Religion, The Jewish Theological Seminary, and in other graduate schools, mostly in the vicinity of New York.

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[1] There was a total of twenty-three men and fifty-four women in this group.

All except one of the students in this group had definite vocational goals. This individual seemed to be a rara avis of some sort for he had taken no interest in college activities, claimed to have no friends, and resented receiving offers of help in vocational guidance. The careers upon which the other students expected to enter included medicine, teaching, applied biology and chemistry, theology, experimental and industrial psychology, applied physics, and biological research.

Like the men, the women in the three and a half year group had accelerated their courses of study because they were spurred on by future goals. But whereas the men's aspirations were predominantly linked with vocational and professional callings, these aims were, for the majority of the women, secondary to marriage. At the time of the interviews, 14 of the 46 women who responded were married and 10 were engaged to be married before the end of the year. They had wished to hasten the date of graduation with a dual purpose in mind, marriage and a vocational career, for in most cases one was dependent on the other. The economic situation usually presupposed a definite obligation on the part of the woman to earn enough money during the first years of marriage in order to help set up a home or in some cases to provide major support for the husband while he completed his own professional education. The students interviewed frankly admitted that they intended to follow a career only as long as it was financially necessary or feasible to do so. Their primary aim in life was not to achieve professional success, but to find security in a happy family life. Of the fact that they would ultimately fulfill this ambition, they seemed confident.

For the reasons mentioned, and frequently at the insistence of parents whose confidence in the future was not as strong as their daughters', 31 of the women in this group (65%) had decided that the career that would best suit their purpose was teaching. Most of them had prepared to teach on the elementary school level because of their interest in young children, and because, unlike high school teaching, it did not necessitate majoring in another field of study. In this way, by dint of serious application to the field of teaching, they achieved excellent grades and early graduation. Teaching had other advantages such as vacations and working hours that would permit meeting domestic responsibilities and most important of all, a measure of future security. Even if marriage and children might compel them to give up their chosen work for a time, these women felt that they could always fall back on their professions should the need arise. Two excellent students who had prepared to teach planned to postpone their careers to the future, since their husbands' plans demanded indefinite sojourns in foreign countries.

Only two women in this group had no future vocational plans and intended to settle down as "housewives." The rest (12 students) were preparing to enter the following fields of endeavor: medicine, law, speech therapy, medical illustration, statistics, industrial chemistry, publicity, advertising, publishing, and international trade. Only one of these students' future careers was not connected with her college studies. She had become thoroughly acquainted with the export-import business in which she had been employed during her three and a half years at college and was now looking forward with enthusiasm to developing her interests in this direction.

When we consider their intense concentration on studies, it is not surprising that the men and women in the three and a half year group had little time left over for extra-curricular activities, and it would, therefore, be unfair to judge the entire class by this minority. In order to receive permission to carry more than the usual number of credits per semester, these students had to maintain better than average grades. Besides carrying excess credits, most of the students attended summer schools and held part-time positions in industry and business. The science students with their long laboratory hours had little or no chance to take part in campus activities and, as a result, regretted that they had not had the time or opportunity to indulge in the usual college "bull sessions." A summary of the group's extra-curricular activities is therefore short: about 20% belonged to fraternities and sororities, about 30% had at one time or another been affiliated with house plans or with departmental clubs.

The students who had completed college in three and a half years have been characterized as "purposeful," serious, and devoted to the scholastic side of college life. They also gave the impression of containing more than the average number of independent thinkers who were willing to discuss the effect of the college on their development. The most common complaint of science students was that their reading habits had remained undeveloped. They felt that their studies and their laboratory work had trained them well in logical and critical thinking, that they had learned to assume responsibility and to work independently through carrying out their assignments. However, most of them read hardly anything that was not related to their field of study. In the whole group, there was also a general feeling among the students that they had not been adequately trained to express themselves in writing. They regretted that this had not been stressed more frequently in courses outside of the English department. Many suggested the need for improving vocational guidance in the field of major study and for increasing information on graduate schools before the senior year.

While Brooklyn College was given credit for helping the student to think more objectively and for preparing him adequately to enter on a future career either immediately or by way of graduate study, student attitudes were discredited by their own contemporaries. Their excessive preoccupation with grades was attacked and attributed to their misunderstanding of the true nature of scholarship, of "learning for the sake of learning." One student went so far as to denounce this attitude as "a generally low aesthetic and intellectual interest." Another critical student summarized a feeling expressed by several that "it is unusual to find intellectual stimulation in the general student body." According to his statement, "the students at Brooklyn College tend to lend little diversification and knowledge to each other. Perhaps this is due to the similarity of their economic and ethnic backgrounds." It may indeed be true that Brooklyn College is at a disadvantage both socially and intellectually because of inbreeding. In order for students to broaden their intellectual horizons, their interests and beliefs, they must be placed in contact with different cultures and divergent points of view.

B. The Four Year Group That Graduated in February, 1957

The four year group as a whole was not characterized by the individualism and independence of the three and a half year group. These students represented "averageness," a commonness of views and an extreme reluctance to express themselves on issues in the least controversial which made them perhaps appear more typical of their generation, of the "lonely crowd." In spite of repetitiousness, it was, however, an enlightening and interesting experience to confer with 244 students registered as upper seniors in the fall of 1956.[2]

Why They Went to Brooklyn College

During the sophomore year, the students in the class that entered in February 1953 had been asked in a questionnaire why they had chosen to come to Brooklyn College. It has been pointed out that their answers were vague, and that in most cases their reasons had been identified with their vocational aims. During the senior interviews, therefore, an attempt was made to obtain more definite responses to this question, and to elucidate the problem further by asking the students whether they would have preferred to attend an institution out of town. But although the reasons and opinions presented by the men and women in this group differed, the majority were still connected with vocational objectives. About 50% of the men affirmed that they had come to Brooklyn College to "get a general education as a preparation for a better job," and 25% claimed that they had had definite and professional aims in mind when they entered. The rest of the men in this group had less well-defined purposes in mind, and gave the impression that "social pressures" had played a part in their decision to go to college. Their views can be summarized by the following statement: "I wish to be successful in life, and I felt that a college education would lead me to a position of social acceptability." Two of the men frankly admitted that they had gone to college to "stay out of the army."

But even though nearly all the men felt that Brooklyn College had very adequately fulfilled their purposes, 70% admitted that they would have preferred to attend an out-of-town college. The reasons presented, however, were not connected with criticisms of curricular offerings; they were personal. Attendance at a college away from New York would have freed them from family pressures and obligations and would very likely have led to an improvement in their social standing. Nearly all these respondents felt that the personal privacy resulting from such freedom would have favorably affected their scholastic standing.

In explaining why they had decided to attend Brooklyn College, the women in the group stressed cultural aspects more than the vocational. About 50% stated that they wished to obtain "a general liberal arts education in order to broaden their cultural background" and, incidentally, to improve their vocational opportunities. About 30%, however, had had a vocational aim in mind, mostly in the field of education, at the time of admission to college. The rest of the reasons presented are exemplified by: "I wished to follow the norm in my social class"; "I wished to fulfill what was expected of me"; "I wished to be near home in Brooklyn"; "I went to college because of parental pressure."

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[2] There were 266 registered upper seniors. Twenty-two failed to make appointments for interviews even after a second and third invitation.

Like the men, the women in this group were entirely satisfied that their purpose in coming to college had been fulfilled at Brooklyn College. Unlike the men, however, the majority, about 57%, would not have enjoyed going to an out-of-town college. Most of them had never given the matter much thought. They had chosen to attend Brooklyn College because they did not want to leave Brooklyn. Attendance at out-of-town colleges would have meant not only disruption of their social lives but would have exposed them to the dangers of the unknown. Brooklyn College meant social security for most of the women, for it was almost like a continuation of high school, a place where one would meet old friends, relatives, and neighbors, people of the same intellectual and social level. The strange world of the out-of-town college represented insecurity where social acceptance was not assured, and demanded a breaking of ties with the world they knew and understood.

In choosing the institution in which they were to receive their undergraduate education, the Brooklyn College class of February 1957 seemed to have reflected little on the merits of its educational policies, of its standards, or of its scholastic rating in relation to other colleges. It had a good reputation, its graduates were successful, and best of all it was free and offered courses that would eventually lead to the degree necessary for their vocational and social improvement. What they had gained both in the classroom and on the campus in their four years of college had gone beyond their expectations, and the responses of both the men and the women left no doubt in the mind of the interviewer that they had enjoyed Brooklyn College, and that very few indeed regretted their choice.

According to the responses to the interviews, Brooklyn College had succeeded in helping 83% of the men and 91% of the women fulfill their vocational aims. One third of the men with definite vocational goals intended to teach in college or high school, one third expected to eventually practice law, and the rest hoped to enter the fields of accounting, dentistry, labor relations, medicine, research in science, and theater production. Several of the men had shown foresight in preparing themselves in more than one area, for instance, in law and accounting, with the intention of ultimately basing their career decisions on the profession for which they were best suited. The men in this group who had not decided on a definite life vocation had drifted from one goal to another, and in spite of family pressure, had been unable to make up their minds. Some of these people intended to continue their schooling in the hope that it would help them in planning their future careers. One hoped to become a creative writer; others intended to investigate the fields of photography, public relations, and public health.

About 70% of the women respondents who had definite vocational goals had named teaching, mostly on the elementary school level, as their chosen career. The rest intended to make personnel, library, social work, clinical psychology, speech therapy, nutrition, editing, the theater, and scientific research the fields of their future work. The women who had failed to decide on definite vocational goals were postponing their choices until "after marriage" or "after further study."

Seventy-five per cent of the men and 68% of the women had definite plans for continuing their studies in graduate or professional schools. 10% of the men said they were uncertain while 10% of the women were "postponing their choice till later in life." The majority of the women intended to take courses toward their Master of Arts degree in education at Brooklyn College.

Social Development

The students' social development, as it was reflected in their diversions, outside interests, and co-curricular activities from the time of their admission to Brooklyn College in February 1953 to their sophomore year in 1954, has been described. In order to complete the picture, however, it is necessary to ascertain changes in the students' attitudes and interests at the time of their graduation in 1957, and if possible, to determine the factors that contributed to the moulding of their social pattern.

Since the students at Brooklyn College live at home with their families, their personal and extra-campus experiences have a dominant effect on their social activities; the college milieu has less of an effect, or, if anything, college social life is merely an extension of their family life. There is also little doubt that steady dating and marriage during college years produces changes in students' interests in extra-curricular activities and attitudes. In the fall of 1956, this applied to about 30% of the groups interviewed; three of the men and 22 of the women were married while seven of the men and 10 of the women had formally announced their engagements.

The students' attitudes towards such diversions as dancing and attendance at theaters, concerts and sporting events had undergone changes. "Going to dances" was an activity that belonged to the past, especially among the women. They still enjoyed dancing, but shuddered at the thought of attending a dance unescorted. Their tastes had become more sophisticated, but instead of formal dances that were considered "boring," they preferred the informality of dancing at private parties, restaurants and night clubs attended in couples. As much as dancing, most of the respondents enjoyed spending social evenings with their friends listening to good recordings or occasionally viewing television.

Since their sophomore year, the students' interest and enthusiasm for the theater had greatly increased, 65% attending more than four times a year. They frequented not only as many Broadway "hit shows" as possible, but were habitues of the more serious offerings in "off Broadway little theaters." Similarly, their attendance at concerts had increased; the surprisingly large number of musical events mentioned by many of the respondents showed the effect of the outdoor concerts held at the City College Stadium in the summer. In contrast to the theater and the concert, however, the students' attendance at the cinema had diminished; their taste had become more discriminating since their freshman year, and they were now interested only in especially good American films and in reputable foreign pictures. Interest in sporting events had fallen off most sharply from 82% of the class in 1953 to 72% in 1954 to 22% in 1956.

To what extent the changes in the students' cultural and social patterns were stimulated by their educational experiences is not easily measurable, for while the college certainly contributed to the development of their powers of discernment and judgment, other factors that played a part in moulding them to maturity must not be overlooked. The influence of environment forces, of families, and of friends not connected with the college are reflected in their behavioral patterns. Perhaps the great city of New York itself with its infinite offerings in the fields of music, art, and the theater served as one of the strongest stimuli for the students' cultural tastes and social interests.

It is possible that interests in cultural diversions provided by the metropolis and in television and good musical recordings in the home were responsible for the decline in reading for pleasure among the students in the group under discussion. The respondents themselves attributed the deterioration of their reading habits to the great amount of reading assigned in courses and to the outside employment which took up most of their spare time. Be that as it may, most of the students admitted that they read little during the college year outside of their assignments. During the summer they caught up with the books on the best seller's list and occasionally with works of poetry, art, and music. The avid readers were in the minority and were usually superior students in the humanities and social sciences. The rest had good intentions, and expressed the hope that after graduation, time would permit them to read the many books that they had always intended to read.

The fact that the students were so much a part of city life also helps to explain their meager participation in campus activities. Students who seldom or never joined in extra-curricular offerings conceded that the college, which afforded ample opportunities for doing so, was in no way to blame. They ascribed their failure to take part in school activities to "lack of interest" and "lack of time," to outside employment and to non-campus activities that to their mind were "more valuable to their social interests." They frankly admitted that they felt they could broaden their outlook on life by increasing their non-college contacts, and some of the women even confessed that they hoped thereby to "improve their matrimonial chances." These students usually devoted their leisure time to a variety of church and temple clubs, and to other organizations of a religious, cultural, or philanthropic nature.

Students were most active in co-curricular activities during the first two years of college. Their most enduring interests were in Panhellenic organizations to which 28% of the men and 20% of the women in the group under discussion belonged. At the time of the senior interviews, however, only a limited number of students belonged to clubs connected with their major scholastic interests like the Bio-Medical Society and the Bureau of Economic Research, and a comparatively small number of the students were active members of the house-plans and religious organizations they had joined as freshmen. They had begun to drop out after the sophomore year when 16% of the men and 60% of the women belonged to house-plans and 10% of the men and 11% of the women were active members of campus religious organizations. Students had usually been weaned away by more worldly interests. Some of the reasons openly admitted were: "It was a waste of time"; "I got married"; "I became engaged"; "I met someone whom I see steadily." "Now we visit or go out to restaurants, the theater, concerts, etc." In these students' conception, the house-plan was basically a meeting place for unattached young people, and it no longer served a social purpose after a permanent attachment with a member of the opposite sex had been formed. Other students gave more serious reasons for ceasing to participate in extra-curricular activities. These were connected with criticism of the way in which they were conducted, as illustrated by the following statements: "I had a feeling of isolation. In my opinion, they were dominated by cliques."

The average student's minimal participation in extra-curricular activities was due to outside social interests as well as to more serious occupations to studies at institutions other than Brooklyn College and to employment in the business world. In 1956 about the same percentage of the class as in 1954 were occupied with outside studies and about the same percentage were gainfully employed. Although 93% of the class had held positions in business or industry during their four years at college, only two men and one woman claimed to have been completely self-supporting. For most of the rest, work was essential in the sense that the students desired to be independent of their families and to relieve any strains on its budget. The money earned was used for personal needs, for text books, clothes, amusements, "dates," and the little luxuries that they could not expect to obtain from parents of limited means. Even students whose economic status did not require them to seek outside employment seemed impelled to do so. For these, holding a position presented a challenge they were anxious to meet, their opportunity to come in contact with the outside world, and a growing sense of independence and self-fulfillment.

There is no doubt that most of the Brooklyn College students in the class under discussion led busy lives. Besides attending classes and preparing assignments, nearly all of them were engaged in countless activities -- some financially or culturally gainful, others purely social or recreational. Only a part of their lives were centered in the college and its campus, other parts were focused on the home and the family and most often on attractions of the city itself.

The Seniors' Evaluation of the College

The most revealing and valuable results of the senior interviews from an educational point of view were derived from questions that led the respondents into a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of the college on their personal and intellectual development. Had Brooklyn College carried out its major aims as a liberal arts institution through the content of its courses, its teaching and counseling services, by its intellectual atmosphere? Had it inspired its students to become more responsible and complete human beings? The purpose of the latter part of the interviews was to measure the college's success in carrying out its purpose. To probe the students' thinking, six questions were posed during the interviews. These, with the exception of one which was inspired by a news item reported in the *New York Times* on October 22, 1956, were based on a restatement and amplification of the aims of a liberal arts education as stated in the Brooklyn College Bulletin.

In responding to the six questions, the students were advised to consider their answers carefully, not to limit them to specific courses and teachers, but to base them on their general college experiences with appropriate elucidations. Students were asked: 1) Describe the *kind* of course that helped you most and the *kind* of course that helped you least to develop the power of thinking "critically" and "logically." 2) Was the need to write English with "clarity" and "precision" stressed in courses outside of the English Department? 3) Has your sense of "individual responsibility" towards your work, your family, and your friends increased since your admission to Brooklyn College? 4) Has your understanding of effective social relations been strengthened? 5) Have you developed an interest in the community relations? 6) Have any of your traditional beliefs been placed in jeopardy? The last question derived from a speech made by Dr. William S. Carlin, president of the University of the State of New York, at a meeting of the Mental Health Foundation. The *Times* summarized the speech as follows:

> Colleges contribute to students' mental instability by providing an atmosphere in which traditional beliefs are questioned and none are put in their place.

Learning to Think Critically and Logically

The first question caused some difficulty, for students seemed customarily not to have appraised their courses from this point of view. In their eagerness to answer, they would frequently respond: "Courses in logic develop the power to think logically and critically." After careful reflection, however, the average respondent would describe such a course as dependent on the guidance of an instructor who had the ability to make students think for themselves by directing discussions skillfully and by encouraging student opinion while at the same time limiting "random, desultory, irrelevant" student thought. Other students expressed the belief that the content, not the instructor, was the determining factor; but most of them believed that large classes and lecture courses precluded the development of critical thinking.

Nearly all the respondents to the first question agreed that only a small percentage of the courses they had taken had been of such nature that they required and encouraged individual expression of ideas. When they recalled to mind courses of this type, they would usually refer to electives in their own or related major fields, and would mention assignments in the form of "projects" and essays in which it had been necessary to express independent judgments. The consensus of opinion was that most classes were conducted in the following manner: the instructor imparted a great deal of information which it was the student's responsibility to assimilate and reiterate on demand. The students, on the whole, were not critical of such courses since they gained a good deal of knowledge in them without an excessive amount of effort on their part. They admitted, however, that the courses that they would remember longest and with the greatest enthusiasm were those in which they had been guided into applying their own critical powers to the material that had been presented to them by the instructor.

According to the average student in the group, the courses that had inspired them least to critical thought were: 1) courses in which too much memorization was demanded; 2) uninteresting, required courses with boring teachers who revealed that they did not enjoy teaching them; 3) courses, especially lecture courses, in which students did not understand the subject matter under discussion and were not encouraged to obtain clarification; 4) courses in which obscure ideas were propounded without adequate explanations; 5) courses in which a mass of ideas without critical discussion were preffered instead of a few clearly presented concepts. In their criticisms, the average students revealed that they held their instructors responsible for their own failure to understand material presented in courses. These young people seemed to consider themselves a captive audience of bored teachers compelled to give courses for which they had little interest. The students' unreceptiveness, however, they felt was due not so much to an inadequate presentation of subject matter, as to the instructor's failure to arouse the students' intellectual participation and critical judgment.

The superior students' criticisms were not motivated by a need for guidance in comprehending the subject matter of their courses. Whereas the average students had complained that "teachers leave us too much on our own," and had expressed a definite desire to be directed, the more gifted students were able to grasp the basic content of courses with little or no explanation and were usually eager to work independently. It is, therefore, understandable that they were irked by inferior students who sought the instructor's individual attention for the clarification of the obvious. This is expressed in the statement of a respondent who claimed: "I was bored by the opportunists who are allowed to monopolise classroom discussion without contributing originality of thought." Other statements indicted the courses themselves: "Many of the courses failed to be 'provocative'"; "the standards set in courses were 'too lax'." The superior students gave the impression that the college atmosphere was desiccated and that both "teachers and students evinced a lack of intellectual curiousity." This opinion was summarized by one of the respondent's description of the intellectual atmosphere at the college. "Students outside of the classroom at Brooklyn College never talk of anything but teachers and courses. Intellectual problems are seldom discussed."

For different reasons, both the average and the superior students in the group under discussion had indicated the college's failure to stimulate sufficiently the students' critical powers. The average student usually remained unstimulated, for he was not averse to remaining in a state of educational inertia. He enjoyed attending well-presented, carefully directed courses which he could pass successfully without independent thinking by simple acquiescence to the ideas presented by the instructor. The exceptional student of high intellectual calibre, however, was bored by unstimulating courses geared to the average student's demands, and begrudged the time wasted on needless reiterations and unfruitful discussions. He was fully aware that in such courses his critical powers had not been fully put to a test, and he consequently decried the college for its failure to satisfy his yearning for greater independence of thought.

Learning to Write Concisely and Clearly.

Most of the students in the group under discussion were well aware of the importance of being able to express themselves clearly and concisely. Nevertheless the question, whether "the need to write in clear and concise English" had been stressed in courses outside of the English Department, met with different reactions. Students with above-average grades in prescribed English courses or with English majors seemed justifiably to be taken aback by the query. They habitually wrote correctly, had never been called to account for failing to do so, and consequently did not look upon written English as a problem. Some respondents with average and below-average grades, however, admitted their incompetence regretfully, possibly because they realized that their inability to write effectively had affected their grades in non-English courses adversely. These people would not have taken it amiss if they could have been helped to perfect their writing, but would have considered it "unfair" if their grades had been lowered because of incorrect English usage. Other respondents, however, became indignant at the idea of non-English instructors making correct written expression a requirement in their courses. In these students' words, "the way in which we express ourselves" was not as important as "the ideas we express." One resentful student, a major in accounting, with below average grades in courses outside of his field, claimed: "In my profession, I don't have to write well." The interviewer found it impossible to impress this young man with the importance of clear and precise English in achieving success in his future career.

According to the respondents in this group, correct expression was stressed in a few college departments and in occasional courses where poorly expressed answers in examinations and badly written term papers and reports were not acceptable. English grammar was indirectly taught in foreign language courses as a prerequisite for an understanding of the foreign grammar, and in Education courses as part of the subject matter for elementary schools. About 25% of the respondents, however, felt that clarity of expression had had little or no bearing on their ultimate success in college. Nearly all the examinations they had taken had been of the objective type and had required neither critical thinking nor clarity and precision of expression. Essays and reports, in most cases, were graded for content only, so that students deficient in expressing themselves effectively were usually unaware of their failing, and only very seldom received constructive criticism.

The thoughtful students in the group interviewed were in agreement in regretting that clarity and precision of expression had not been stressed to a greater extent, for even those who had been eminently successful in their studies frequently felt inadequate in this direction. Why correct written English had not received more attention in non-English courses, however, can be explained. Classes are large and many instructors feel themselves overburdened. Objective tests can be graded more easily and quickly and fairly than essays. When essays and reports are required, some instructors find it unnecessary to grade them for anything but content. But in disregarding form and language, they either express their agreement with the students who claim that this does not lie in their province and is the concern solely of the English department, or in spite of their better judgment, they hesitate to arouse the antagonism of the average student who might consider their procedure "unfair." It is evident that the foundations for effective written expression that have been laid in the prescribed English courses should be strengthened in the latter half of the students' college careers, and that this aim can only be accomplished with the full cooperation of both the faculty and the student body.

Personal Development

During the senior interviews, an attempt was made to ascertain to what extent the educational and social opportunities provided at Brooklyn College had affected the students' development into responsible human beings, their understanding of "effective social relations," their interest in the community as a whole, and their inherent beliefs and convictions. The fact that Brooklyn College had competed with other agencies in this regard has been noted previously, and makes comprehensible how difficult it was both for the respondent and the interviewer to draw sharp dividing lines between the influences of the home, friends, non-campus social activities and the city as a whole as forces that served to shape the students during their formative years at college.

The question whether "the student's sense of responsibility towards his work, his family, and his friends" had increased during the four years he had spent at Brooklyn College was of this difficult nature, and could not be answered with complete assurance. About 25% of the respondents rejected entirely the idea that Brooklyn College had been a determinant of their growth into more responsible individuals. About 75% of the respondents, however, believed that their educational experiences at Brooklyn College had contributed to their development in this direction. They attributed this to the influence of instructors who had not "spoon fed" them, who had inculcated in them a sense of individual responsibility toward their work and had treated them not like children who needed constant prodding but like mature people whose success or failure depended on their own efforts. A number of the respondents in this group who had assumed positions of leadership in co-curricular activities at college also acknowledged the beneficial effect of their participation as a factor that contributed to their growing maturity. Nevertheless, nearly all the respondents in this group called attention to the fact, proven by their success in high school, and by their feeling of responsibility toward their families, that they had been "responsible" people even before entry to Brooklyn College. The majority of students, indeed, had shown willingness to assume economic responsibilities by obtaining employment in the business world and by their readiness to assist their parents in maintaining the household in times of emergency; a smaller number, mostly women, had also shown maturity and foresight in facing the problems of matrimony at an early age.

In answering the next question, nearly all the respondents (about 90%) agreed that their understanding of effective social relations had been strengthened through co-curricular activities, the many new friendships they had formed at Brooklyn College, and experiences gained while serving as student teachers. Some of the men enthusiastically attributed their understanding of social relations as well as of leadership, comradeship, and social responsibility to the ROTC courses that they had attended. In spite of the respondents' agreement concerning their social growth, however, there were conflicting opinions concerning Brooklyn College as an effective means for achieving this development. On the affirmative side were the students, previously described, whose provincialism led them to believe that their happiest social relationships took root in their own community and in a college where they could find understanding among young people of similar backgrounds; on the negative side were students who longed for wider social horizons and disclaimed the "sameness" of the student body as a retarding force. The following example is illustrative of many students who appreciate the need of external social contacts but at the same time fear to break with the world in which they were bred: One of the respondents had transferred to Brandeis College in her freshman year with the intention of "broadening her views," but had returned to Brooklyn College in her junior year because of her dissatisfaction with life at an out-of-town campus. Although at Brandeis, she had not completely broken with her social milieu, she did not feel at home there; she missed the bustle of the big city and the congenial atmosphere of her own Brooklyn social circle.

Because it seemed evident that the students' understanding of "social relations" did not include "community relations," they were asked whether they had developed an interest in community relations during their four years at college. Their responses implied that Brooklyn College had to some extent been successful in awakening in the students an awareness of the nature of group problems, but that it had failed to foster in them a lasting and active interest in the community. This failure should not be attributed to the college's educational policies, but rather to the preoccupation of many students with themselves. Through sociology and education courses, the majority of the students had been introduced into the sphere of inter-group relations; yet they expressed no intention of continuing in this work in the future, and felt no need to become involved in neighborhood affairs. While a small minority of the respondents was actively engaged in neighborhood settlements, political clubs, or the national election in 1956, most of them, either because of lack of time or because of frankly acknowledged disinterest, never gave a thought to community activities. That the college was successful, however, in inculcating in a small group of respondents a genuine understanding of community problems is illustrated by the following statement made by one of them

> Interest in group activities must first be developed at Brooklyn College which I consider my "present community", so that I can later apply the knowledge and experience acquired in this way to outside communities.

In order to complete the appraisal of the students' personal development as it was affected by Brooklyn College's liberal arts program, the graduating seniors were asked to comment on Dr. Carlin's contention that colleges "contributed to students' mental instability" by questioning their "traditional beliefs." Their responses entirely disproved his allegation, for the respondents were certain that their traditional beliefs had not been placed in jeopardy by the teachings in any of their courses. Even the most orthodox students (Jewish and Christian) felt sure that the moral and religious views and beliefs they may have held when they entered the college as freshmen had not been destroyed, but rather "broadened" by their educational experiences. They roundly declared that their outlook on life had been liberalized, and that they could continue in their old beliefs with new understanding. The following experiences recounted by two respondents, both with inbred convictions and traditional beliefs, will serve to illustrate the situation: The first, a student of orthodox Jewish background described herself as having been "in turmoil" and "adhering to my religion only because of tradition" before her entrance to Brooklyn College.

> I lived in a shell and followed the ritual as a habit. At Brooklyn College, my own beliefs were clarified, so that I now approach religion more intelligently and with a more positive point of view.

On the other hand, the second student, an active member of the Student Christian Organization, felt that the clarification of her beliefs had not been the result of her educational experiences at Brooklyn College. Although her religious convictions had not been endangered by her studies at Brooklyn College, she felt that her college courses had not helped her to formulate a positive philosophy of life. She said: "The college failed to develop certain philosophic ideas and beliefs that were crystalized for me at Student Christian Conferences held out of town."

C. The Four and One Half Year Group That Graduated in June 1957

The students who graduated in three and a half years and those who graduated in four years have been depicted as representing individual characteristics. By the same token, the "stragglers" who took four and a half years to complete their college education may be described as a group marked by contradictory traits. Some showed perseverance in the face of adversity while others may be described as perseverant only in the sense of being indifferent to what was happening to their college careers. Some showed rebelliousness while others showed marked affinity for conforming.

By February 1957, the great bulk of the class that had entered college in February 1953 was no longer in attendance. Only 79 of the original 858 students were still registered as undergraduates in the college of liberal arts. Of these, 39 men and 22 women were members of the senior class. Because of circumstances beyond their control or by their own volition their graduation had been delayed for various reasons. In order to round off the description of the graduating seniors, it was decided to invite these students to make appointments for interviews. Thirty-two men and 19 women responded.

Reasons for Delayed Graduation

By means of the interviews an attempt was made to find out why these students' graduation was delayed, to ascertain their future goals, and to discover in what way, if any, their attitudes differed from those of the rest of the class.

About half of the students in the four and a half year group were completing their courses because of tenacity of purpose. They had been unfortunates, compelled by circumstances beyond their control to take leaves of absence from the college or to transfer to the School of General Studies. Among these were three who had suffered severe illness, five whose economic status compelled them to seek full-time employment, and two whose emotional problems during previous semesters had prevented them from concentrating on their studies. The students whose graduation had been delayed by low scholarship had also been faced with personal and family problems, considered by them to be the underlying reasons for their failure to achieve scholastic success. Another student who had been prevented from graduating within the usual four years was chronically ill, and had, therefore, each semester been compelled to limit the size of her program by the Brooklyn College Medical Office.

In contrast to the students who had been prevented from devoting themselves fully to their college work by personal hardships, however, stood those who were carefree and indolent or whose graduation had been delayed by pleasure-seeking or self-promoting obligations. With the exception of the chronically ill student, the explanations of the students whose graduation had been delayed because they had taken less than the usual number of courses during several semesters did not imply adverse circumstances. Three of the respondents had done so because of their leadership in student activities, five had purposely postponed graduation because they "enjoyed taking it easy" and preferred to graduate in June rather than in February, while two had been enabled thereby to avoid being drafted into the armed forces between January and June. Five respondents had been prevented from carrying a full program because of domestic obligations incurred by marriage, while another student's graduation had been delayed because she had been teaching at a parochial school during her college years, a position that she hoped would develop into a life career. An interesting member of this group was an ardent young Zionist, who had withdrawn from Brooklyn College to spend a year in Israel in a workshop activity.

All these people who had postponed graduation either because of the exigencies of fate or because of personal reasons, had in most cases acted in accordance with the college regulations. There were only three students in the group who by defying administrative rules and absenting themselves indiscriminately from their classes, had incurred penalties by which they had been denied credit in several courses. One of these students had been psychologically ill, and was under the care of a psychiatrist, while the others were just "scoffers of the law." This is illustrated by the following statement: "I am too artistic. I cannot stay in courses in which I am unhappy."

The Aims of the Four and a Half Year Students

An additional reason for delayed graduation is attributable to the fact that most of the respondents had been confused concerning their educational goals. The extra time that these students had spent at college had, however, benefited them in adjusting to life, and in clarifying their aims, as will be illustrated by the following examples. Five of the respondents who had postponed graduation had, shortly after admission, felt that they disliked college intensely. They had, therefore, decided to take leaves of absence from school in order to try their fortunes in the world of business. During the interviews, these students confessed that they looked upon the period in which they had withdrawn from college "with the greatest dissatisfaction." One of these who had entered college young at sixteen years of age and withdrawn one year later to go to work, soon "realized her mistake," and returned to college. She summarized her experiences by: "I now love every minute of college."

Several other students had switched from their original purpose in coming to college, some more than once -- from medicine to physical geology, from dentistry to law to accounting, from music to education, from education to speech, and from social work to English. Finally, however, most of the students in the group under discussion had been helped by their studies at Brooklyn College to prepare themselves for definite vocational goals. Their vocational aims were similar to those of the rest of the class. Ten per cent (five men) had made no definite decisions concerning their future plans. The rest of the men had made the following choices: seven intended to teach or go into the field of social work, three to become lawyers or accountants, two, writers, two, biochemical research workers, and the others, dentists, chemists, physicians, geologists, and international workers, while the rest had prepared for careers in speech therapy, art, economics, and dietetics.

Co-Curricular and Social Activities

In the pattern of their co-curricular and off-campus activities, the students who had delayed graduation did not differ greatly from the rest of the class. About 25% of the respondents had taken no part in college social activities. Five men and two women, however, had belonged to Panhellenic organizations, and 13 men and nine women to house-plans. It is interesting to note that three of the most prominent members of the class, recognized student leaders, were nominated for All-College awards. These young people had delayed their graduation because of the time they devoted to activities in behalf of the college.

The evaluation of the college made by the students who were still in attendance in the spring of 1957 did not present any material that might change the summaries based on the interviews with the rest of the class. In their activities, in their goals, in the patterns of their lives, they did not deviate greatly from the group as a whole. In their personal characteristics, however, there was great disparity. Among them were student leaders interested ingroup activities, individualistic recalcitrants, the stout of heart in the face of scholastic failure and personal adversity, the ambitious and the listless -- representatives of Brooklyn College as a whole.

D. An Evaluation of Brooklyn College Goals

The interviews conducted in the fall of 1955 served a dual purpose, to appraise 1) the success of certain phases of Brooklyn College's liberal arts program and 2) the effect of this program on the intellectual and personal development of the students who entered the college in February 1953.

Brooklyn College had achieved a measure of success in carrying out those goals that were related to the students' personal development.[3] Through its instructional and counselling staffs, it had striven to develop a stronger sense of individual responsibility in its students, especially in those whose immaturity caused them to neglect their obligations to their studies; through its courses and curriculum, it had also fostered in its students an "appreciation of human personality." Most of the respondents indubitably revealed that they had a mature understanding of the human personality and that they understood the need to maintain good social relationships with others; although the students as a whole did not show an inclination to be actively engaged in community service, the college, through its educational policies, had succeeded in awakening in them an interest in group relations.

The college, however, had not had as favorable results in carrying out one of its curricular goals,[4] to strengthen the students' ability to make independent judgments. The interviews revealed that the average respondent's critical powers had not been sufficiently challenged. Intellectually, except for the percipient few, they had remained stagnant. If the average student can acquire knowledge effortlessly, if he is only infrequently presented with situations in his studies that demand independent judgment, why should he bestir himself from his complacency? If his tests, reports, and essays are read for content only, and if his deficiency in "expressing himself clearly and concisely" is usually not called to his attention, how is he to improve?

Personal contact with the seniors who graduated in February 1956 had projected the group into the realm of reality, and revealed phases of their personality that might otherwise have remained veiled by a haze of statistics. At the time of their admission to Brooklyn College in February 1953, they were described as a "homogeneous" group of young Brooklynites, serious and realistic, eager for success, and ready to assume the responsibilities of college life. With few exceptions, those who had survived the rigors of the curriculum until graduation had enjoyed what the college had offered them intellectually, culturally, and socially. Most of them had not regretted their decision to attend Brooklyn College, even though they might have preferred originally to attend an institution outside of New York. The college had helped to prepare them for future vocational or educational goals to which they looked forward with eager anticipation.

It has been noted previously that the interviews with the group of seniors who graduated four years after admission left the impression that they could be characterized by the term "averageness," their likes and dislikes, their aims, and their attitudes toward life were on the whole very similar. In spite of encouragement from the interviewer, they had not felt impelled to express themselves on controversial issues, and, as a result, their criticisms of the college and the curriculum, like their lives, fell into a customary pattern. The students' lives were centered in the home and the family. They looked forward to secure, conventional futures, to happy marriages and "safe careers." Their pleasures were simple -- high fidelity recordings, small parties at home, books on best seller's lists, off-Broadway shows, concerts, and "better than usual" motion pictures. They expressed no desire to aspire to that which might at present appear unattainable, and were satisfied to achieve success in the "usual," the kind of success that would bring with it leisure, comfort, and security.

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[3] Reference is made in this paragraph to aims three, four, and five, as stated in the Brooklyn College Bulletin.

[4] This refers to aim two as stated in the Brooklyn College Bulletin.

Their innate sense of responsibility had helped them to develop more mature social attitudes, but had at the same time prevented them from breaking their ties with the world into which they had been born. This feeling of obligation, however, did not extend to the world outside, for the fulfilling of personal aspirations precluded involvement with the community. It is unwise, however, to assume that this apparent self-interest was caused by indifference to the needs of others. The ethical standards of life with which they had grown up, had been challenged by their college education, their understanding of human motives had increased, and their insight into social and communal problems had deepened. Just as they had shut their eyes and ears to many intellectual problems, however, they also closed them to the world outside. Their complacency seemed to designate a fear of being awakened from a pleasant dream, for perhaps by denying the existence of these fears, by their reluctance to be involved in responsibility for community problems, they would be able better to face the future steadfastly and successfully.

CHAPTER VII

STAR PERFORMERS AND ALL THE OTHERS

In describing the class that entered Brooklyn College in February, 1953, the negative aspects of its achievements and the attrition rate in the freshman year have up to this point been stressed, while the positive aspects have been more or less taken for granted. A discussion of academic accomplishment should, however, not be limited to "underachievers," to a portrayal of the intellectually inferior, and should not neglect those who completed college courses successfully and carried their academic goals to fruition. Not entirely unexpectedly, the study of "achievers" should also yield *inter alia* insights into the reliability of grades as such, as the ultimate test of the student's status and worth.

Extremes in contrast are usually of greater interest than the average, but this should not prevent the small minority of the successful students who achieved scholastic honors at college from engaging as much of our attention as those who failed to measure up to the standards set by the college faculty. Both groups of students had embarked on their college careers with similar purposes after successfully meeting the same entrance requirements. They were all aware, to greater or lesser degree, that the fulfillment of their aims to improve themselves intellectually, economically, or socially depended on the satisfactory completion of a number of courses. It is inevitable that students should learn -- as we all do -- that "many are called, but few are chosen." Soon after matriculation, individual differences affecting their college standing began to manifest themselves. For some members of the class, scholastic success opened the road to a potential fulfillment of their aims and to attainments in the world outside; for others, academic failure led to frustration of hopes and ambitions and frequently to a forced severance from the college.

A. Success and Failure - February 1954

In the class under discussion sharp deviations in class averages were recorded after the first semester; by February 1954, grade statistics revealed that 29 students had distinguished themselves by attaining a scholastic average that merited inclusion on the Dean's Honor List while 77 had failed to meet the academic standards of the college (had fallen below the "C" average in nine or more credits of college work).[1]

Whether these divergent scholastic achievements could have been predicted at the time of admission or whether they could have been prevented are thought-provoking problems, difficult to elucidate since they require knowledge not usually available in the college records. The only data that can be accurately employed in a study of the achievements of all students in question are their scholastic records in high school and in college and the statistics on their backgrounds discussed in a previous chapter. Although the available source material may seem adequate, however, such factors as economic, financial, or family problems serve solely as important contributing factors, and fail to throw light on certain other elements that affect scholastic achievement. What is rarely discernible is information concerning the students' psychological constitution, their moral and ethical attitudes, knowledge which presupposes an intimate acquaintance and must remain an "unknown quantity" in the study when pursued merely by statistics of the scholastic accomplishments of the majority of the students.

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[1] Actually the college standards demand that a student maintain a "C" average. This figure is being used arbitrarily.

In attempting to ascertain the factors that may have influenced scholastic achievement in the first year at college, it was considered of importance first to compare the high school averages of the superior and low scholarship students and secondly to relate them to the class as a whole. A comparison based on the first year records of 23 students on the Dean's Honor List (3.1% of the class)[2] and 77 low scholarship students (9% of the class) revealed that there was a strong correlation between their high school averages and college standing. None of the students on the Dean's Honor List had averages below 80%, and none of the low scholarship students[3] had averages of 90% or above in high school. Ninety-three per cent of the "Honor" students were in the above 85% high school average group in contrast to 91% of the "below C average" students who were in the below 85% high school group.

The variability between high school and college grading practices immediately becomes evident. Forty-four per cent of the total entering class in February 1953 had high school averages of 85% or above, but only 3.1% of these students had similar averages in college. None of the entrants had grades below 70%, but 9% of them fell below this average during the first year in college. In the same way, only 19% of the total students who had achieved high school averages of 85% or above received similar grades in college.

The correlation between high school and college grades is, however, still operative. None of the above 90% high school group fell below the "C" average and none of the below 80% group achieved superior grades during the freshman year; 16% of the entrants who stood highest and 13% who stood lowest according to their high school averages achieved similar standing at the end of the first year at college.

It therefore would seem valid that grade statistics based on the achievements of the students who stood highest and those who stood lowest in their class in relation to their high school averages serve as a means for prognosticating scholastic success.

The grades as such, however, are not necessarily conclusive since scholastic achievement expressed in grades is not always a true indication of student ability. Other factors must affect successful scholastic achievement as shown by the following array of facts: 1) 3% of the 85-89% high school average group received college grades below "C", while 2) 3% of this same group averaged above "B"; 3) 14% in the 80-84% high school average group received grades not acceptable for retention at college; 4) only .6% attained the Dean's Honor List.

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[2] Students on Dean's Honor List will be referred to as "Honor Students."

[3] Low Scholarship Students are students who have fallen nine or more credit points below "C".

Some might attribute these deviations to the variability of grading practices in the different high schools which the students attended. An examination of the college standing of the students in the class under discussion in relation to the high schools that prepared them, however, did not reveal any marked differences in grading practices, and therefore does not bear out this theory. Whether the known factors revealed in the students' social and economic backgrounds affected their scholastic achievement remains to be scrutinized. But the intangible and unfathomable elements that contributed to the students' psychological and intellectual development not available for this part of the study still loom as vital, even though they must of necessity be disregarded at this point.

Whether the students' national, social and economic backgrounds played a part -- if any -- in determining their scholastic success in college is now the question. Did students of foreign parentage achieve higher or lower academic standing than those of American background? Did the cultural pattern of the family as it is set by the educational preparation of the parents and the vocational status of the father influence the scholastic accomplishments of the children?

A comparison of the national, educational and occupational backgrounds of the parents of "honor" and "low scholarship" students with those of the class as a whole reveals minor differences in the percentage of foreign born parents, but at the same time indicates that the parents of "honor" students were in general better educated than those of the "underachievers." The greatest discrepancies, however, are to be found in the vocational backgrounds of the fathers.

The percentage of students in the class under discussion who were second generation Americans (both parents born in the United States) is the same for both groups (38%), 2% above the class average. The percentage of "honor" students who were first generation Americans, however, was 4% less than the class average while the percentage for "low scholarship" students was 3% above the average. However, a greater number of "honor students" (34%) than of "low scholarship students" (27%) came from families in which one of the parents was not born in the United States. It is also noteworthy that among the "honor" students it was predominantly the father who was foreign born (10% above the class average) while the "low scholarship" group conformed to the class pattern (21%).

The parents of both "honor" and "low scholarship" students had achieved educational levels beyond the class average. Sixty-five per cent of the fathers in the "honor" group and 72% of the "low scholarship" had gone beyond the elementary school level in contrast to 58.5% of the total class. The mothers in both groups were far better educated: 75% of the mothers of the superior students and 71% of the inferior had attended secondary schools; 25% of the former and 11% of the latter were college or professional school graduates.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the nativity data under discussion as a means of prognosticating college success seem definitely less convincing than the grades that the students achieved in the high school studies. Unless one wishes to assume that foreign fathers have a beneficial effect on the scholastic development of their children, the figures on the national background of the parents are too close to be conclusive. One can, however, say that the cultural level of the family as it is reflected in its educational level and vocational status did affect the achievement of the children. Twice as many fathers and five times as many mothers in the "honor student" group were college or professional school graduates and twice as many fathers were employed in the professions than in the total class. It is nevertheless true that among the low achievers, 16% of the fathers and 11% of the mothers had exposure to higher education. When one considers, however, that half of these better educated parents were in business, whereas among the honor students, there were more parents engaged in the professions, apparently there exists greater stimulus to high-grade scholastic work among the offspring of professional people. A cultural bias would seem, therefore, to be a factor of weight.

B. "Honor" Students: An Analysis of Their Scholastic Attitudes

The average student remains a great unknown to us simply as a result of his averageness. Until the day when an augmented counselor-staff penetrates the miasma of their averageness, there is no choice but to select for study the cases of the non-average -- the honor student and the delinquent student. Sufficient background material is available for these students. The average student's personnel records reveal little but essential data and the results of routine counseling interviews even though the student may have been under severe pressures during his college years. Unless he seeks aid in surmounting his difficulties by bringing them to the attention of counselors or instructors, unless he is reported for failure to meet academic standards, or is recommended for scholastic excellence or outstanding extracurricular achievement, the files rarely reveal his essential attitudes and personal problems. In previous chapters, students with scholastic or private difficulties who were dismissed for poor scholarship, or withdrew of their own accord have been the subject of discussion, but others who despite inadequate high school preparation or personal emergencies completed their college courses with superior achievement have been left out of the picture.

In choosing to study the attitudes of these students in the class who achieved success by appearing on the Dean's Honor List one or more times during their college careers, the discussion is limited to 54 young people, 33 girls and 21 boys, representing a national, economic and social cross section of the class. All the students were interviewed during their senior year, several were known through more intimate association in the classroom or the Dean of Faculty's office, and in nearly all cases the personnel files provided added insights through copies of instructors' letters of recommendation to graduate schools or personality reports. Additional information was also obtained from discussions with instructors who had known these students as members of their classes.

What was of primary interest was to find out whether this group of scholastically successful students was in reality intellectually superior; the paramount questions were to discover what had contributed to their outstanding accomplishments, and what effect their studies had had in developing their ability to continue on an independent basis as critically thinking human beings. But equally important was to discover how their personal characteristics and attitudes as recognised by their instructors, contributed to their achievement, and how they might influence their future development.

The ideal college student has been described as one "who combines the ability to please his teachers by doing well what they ask, and to stand high among his fellows when tested from the point of view that demands fresh use of wide and thoroughly digested knowledge."[4] How many students in the group under discussion belonged to this category, and how many could be more correctly identified with some of the "superior" students interviewed by Professor Naphtali Lewis of Brooklyn College who admitted frankly that their interests "were essentially vocational rather than intellectual"?

> They found themselves on the Dean's List because they applied themselves to get good grades, which they knew they would need for admission to professional schools; honors courses and similar projects accordingly held no interest for them.[5]

The 54 Dean's List students were indeed representative of the total student body. They had received their preparatory education in 19 city high schools and one Catholic parochial school, and had majored in 11 fields of study, the largest number (14) in Education.

The achievements of the group were varied. Only eight students were on the Dean's List during their entire college career. One student was honored for three years, ten for two years, and the rest (33) for only one year. All except ten of the students had achieved superior grades (85% or over) in high school. The lowest high school average (79%) had been obtained by one of the most outstanding members of the class, a veteran who was honored with membership in both Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Chi. Altogether eleven students were admitted to Phi Beta Kappa and two to Sigma Chi; two were graduated summa cum laude, seven magna cum laude, and 21, cum laude. Of these, however, only four or five stand out as unquestionably "superior." The rest reached varying grades of superiority which will be analyzed individually.

At the top of the list were two people for whom going to college had entailed hardships. One had entered college at the age of 26 after having spent four years in the Air Force. His adjustment to his studies was made difficult by the unusual lapse of time between high school and college and by his low entrance average (79%) which probably indicated poor study habits. As a freshman he seems to have been somewhat of a problem for he complained of difficulty in studying, applied to the Reading Clinic and even requested psychological aid. But these early doubts concerning his intellectual ability were soon disproved by the superiority of his accomplishments. With the growth of self realization, he learned to solve his problems, and developed into a "brilliant scientist" with "philosophical insight." One of his instructors paid highest tribute to him as an "independent worker" when he wrote: "He is conscious not only of his own potentialities and difficulties, but also of those of his fellow beings."

The other student also entered college after a lapse of eight years. She had a high school average of 92.5%, but a low entrance score of 175.5% with an indication that science was not one of her strong points. At the time that she entered Brooklyn College, she was married to a factory worker, who seemed to have given her little encouragement to continue with her studies. Getting a college degree was for her a constant domestic and financial struggle which developed into near tragedy when her husband was severely burned while working. In spite of the fact that her time was divided between her household duties, a full business position that she held throughout her college years, and college, this "unusually stable and dependable" young woman was graduated in three and a half years (June 1956) magna cum laude and elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

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[4] The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 37th annual report, 1941-42, p. 57.

[5] Study on Superior Students, Part I, Fall 1956, p. 5.

An equally "ideal" student who had also achieved success in the face of "financial straits" which compelled her to hold outside employment while attending college won the approbation of her instructors for a variety of reasons. She was described as both physically and spiritually attractive. "She is a beautiful, immaculately dressed girl with a pleasant voice that commands attention." "Her morals and ethics are of the highest." She was pictured as a dynamic personality who displayed her critical independence by constantly trying to improve herself. In this connection, one of her instructors said of her, "She is able to accept criticism even to the point of modifying herself in relation to a long established way of living." During her senior interview, however, she expressed criticism of the curriculum which she was completing. As an education major, she had found many of her courses repetitious, and had felt that if some of them could have been "condensed" she might have been able to spend her time in studies of a broader scope. She especially resented her senior year which instead of representing the culmination of her intellectual development was devoted to pupil teaching and a few electives in the form of lecture courses designed for education majors.

A fourth student showed his scholastic superiority through his "inquiring mind." One of his freshman teachers who described him as "sharp with a hawk's eye" seems to have drawn one of his essential traits which marked him for a scientific career. "He was reluctant to accept unclear statements" and "was able to work independently with meticulous care." Because of his "inquisitive nature" and his habit of asking questions "that helped to illuminate the discussion" he must have had an inspiring influence on his teachers as well as on his fellow students.

A student described as "superlative in every respect" and graduated summa cum laude, however, did not measure up to the four students who were ranked as unquestionably superior, especially when he was compared with a young man who had been listed as an honor student for only two of his three and a half college years. The summa cum laude's social development did not seem to have reached the level of his intellectual and moral growth. He had not found time for social activities nor for reading outside of the requirements for his courses, and although he majored in social sciences, his community interests had remained undeveloped. The "two year honor student" may not have achieved as excellent a scholastic record as the "summa cum laude." He had, however, been active in community service, and had been commended by his teachers for his "humility in thinking," his "ability to take criticism and to see many sides of a problem." During the course of his college years, he had developed spiritually as well as intellectually, and had shown his concern not only for his own interests but for those of others. One of his instructors wrote: "His concern with philosophical problems does not stem from intellectual doubts, but from practical and emotional life, from positive thinking."

There were, however, seven young men among the "honor" students whose achievements could not be as clearly evaluated in the light of the "ideal student" defined in the Carnegie Foundation Report as those of the young people who have been discussed up to this point. Perhaps this is due to the fact that their economic backgrounds overshadowed their attitudes toward the curriculum and the college, causing some distortion of the picture. For financial hardships similar to those which have so far been discussed in motivating factors in student attrition and low scholarship, had left their mark on these intellectually superior men. A need to hold employment in the business world had prevented two of the men from taking part in extracurricular activities, and had perhaps also prevented them from making individual impressions on their teachers. One was described as "level headed, mature, neat; he has a good memory." The other was characterized as "unassuming, pleasant, and well spoken." The students had left no positive imprint as far as their intellectual and social development was concerned.

Economic problems seem to have affected the five other men in this group differently. Instead of separating themselves from the problems of the curriculum, and accepting the intellectual fare offered to them without comment, these students were inspired to feelings that ranged from disappointment to bitter resentment at their failure to find their college experiences sufficiently rewarding. An unquestionably superior student, as far as his intellectual tastes and cultural pursuits were concerned, expressed his disillusionment with the Brooklyn College student body in general, and explained that although he appreciated the institution as a preparatory step to graduate school, he found the campus atmosphere uninspiring for a "struggling proletarian" aspiring to a literary career.

A brilliant accounting student was described as "responsible and mature" by one instructor and as "arrogantly superior, not living up to his potential," "lacking in self discipline" by another. Both characterizations were probably accurate, for on the one hand he evinced his sense of responsibility by achieving excellence in his studies, by his activity in extracurricular affairs and by working his way through college; but on the other hand he was bitterly indignant against the college in which he had "wasted time" on inadequate courses with uninspiring teachers. He summarized these feelings during his senior interview with the statement: "I regret that I had (for financial reasons) to come to Brooklyn College which has failed to give me a good education."

A psychology student who was similarly affected by his college experiences was more constructive in his criticisms. His recommendations that there should be "more seminar courses, smaller classes, and increased student-teacher relationships" are worthy of consideration.

Another honor student who was disappointed with his college experiences was an Army Signal Corps veteran who had majored in political science. In the personnel folder, he was described as a "leader whose opinions were sought by his peers" and as a student with "dynamic qualities," characteristics which he expressed as early as his sophomore year when he answered a questionnaire requesting suggestions for improvement in the College's provisions for Freshmen. This was his answer:

> I have had some experience as a student in various schools including in service schools of the Army Signal Corps. I looked forward to my

> study in College and anticipated an edifying and satisfying experience. I have been rather disappointed.
>
> I expected that all the faculty employed in a College would be men and women, who are sold on the subject, and also truly devoted to their profession of teaching. I find that there are some few who teach and have fine rapport with their students; there are just as many who have solely a custodial interest in maintaining order and getting through the hour.
>
> I can't put my finger on the spot of whether the students are not interested or the teachers not interested, that so many classes become positively a bore. I suppose there will never be a return to the time when all teachers taught because they loved learning and teaching. But I believe it is not too much to expect that those who teach, show more enthusiasm for teaching and caring whether students learn.
>
> Can it be that many of the faculty regard teaching with displeasure and even abhorrence, that the students react with disinterest and lack of discipline?

In contrast to these "angry" young men were a group of students who were "ideal" in the sense that they pleased their teachers by "the excellence of their scholastic performance" and by their deference to the demands of the course. There was, however, little evidence of their ability to perform creatively, of meeting the requisite of "making fresh use of wide and thoroughly digested knowledge." In place of this, several of these young people actually expressed a reluctance to act independently of the judgment of others. Among these was a student who graduated magna cum laude. She was described as neat, affable, and cooperative. These characteristics were illustrated in a certain sense during her senior interview where she showed her unwillingness to think for herself and to make her own decisions. Her criticisms of the college were that "there was too much reliance on individual work" in some of the courses, and that the counseling agencies were inadequate. (She had received conflicting advice from different counselors who did not think alike.)

All teachers will readily give assent to the Carnegie Foundation's definition of an ideal student as one who makes "fresh use of wide and thoroughly digested knowledge," but it is very doubtful that any teacher will accept the remainder of the definition which describes the ideal student as one who has "ability to please his teachers by doing well what they ask." This is patent nonsense for it is the business of the student to learn; insofar as pleasing teachers is involved, he need do no more to please them than to learn well, which means to learn how to make fresh use of wide and thoroughly digested knowledge.

Two "honor students" who had majored in modern languages also had no understanding of the broader cultural aspects of education. One had avoided taking literature courses because she was "interested only in linguistics." She explained this unusual attitude toward the study of foreign languages by the following statement: "The study of foreign language is advantageous in itself without the thought of using it in another field." The other student who had taken no part in extracurricular activities and who had "no time to do reading except in research for her assignments" was afraid to jeopardize her excellent grades by taking courses not required in her major. "I must do too much work outside of the class room in order to do well in the courses I am taking."

Reflections of similar attitudes were noticeable in the cases of two "superior" students who had been active in extracurricular activities. Their faculty advisors described them as "never having constructive ideas" and as " never offering suggestions of their own."

The folders of at least ten other students on the Dean's Honor List contained similar recommendations that negated their ability to do creative work. The following statements are illustrative: "--- a charming, over-earnest girl. She has not much initiative nor much creativeness." "She is loved by all who come in contact with her. She has ideas on broader issues." "She has poise, and expresses herself well in writing"; or simply, "sparkling personality." "She is snappy," without a single word about the student's scholastic ability.

Other scholastically superior students stated openly that their aims in coming to college were primarily material. A girl who graduated magna cum laude naively explained: "I always liked going to school. Here I had the opportunity of acquiring the college degree which is free to New York residents." And the student who "had no initiative" according to one of her instructors and had come to Brooklyn College to prepare herself for a career was probably the spokesman for a number of her fellow "honor students" when she said: "I tried to get good grades and I did."

What had the college actually done for the 54 scholastically most gifted students in the class under discussion? It had intended to provide the opportunity to develop intellectually and culturally and had offered basic knowledge and methods of research by means of which they would be able in the future to continue their studies independently. But only about 25% of this group had matured into self-directing, intellectually curious human beings who seemed capable of creative effort. The rest had achieved excellent grades, had even graduated with honors, but although they were driven by ambition, they were circumscribed in their accomplishments by a misunderstanding of educational aims, by an unwillingness to break the shell of conformity, and by a belief that good grades obtained by choosing the right courses and taking the correct attitudes must ultimately lead to success -- attitudes for which exterior circumstances, not the students themselves, are mainly responsible.

The attitudes of the truly superior students differed from the others in that they dared to think for themselves, that they were impelled by a desire to learn more than they could obtain from the average courses which are of necessity geared to the average student. Their ambitions included more than the achieving of scholastic excellence through grades. Their motivating force was their intellect and an "intangible" force that urged them not to accept an idea until they could understand it for themselves, an "inquisitiveness" that obliged them to continue in the search for truth.

Education means self-examination, as Aristotle declared. Not once but often teachers (if they are conscientious and thoughtful enough) face with a heavy heart not the "flunker" but the glib, facile "A" student. Well these teachers know that the process whereby the glib "A" student acquired the "A" empties the term education of all meaning whatsoever. Yet, how to deny the student his "A" grade? Teachers, counselors, and academic deans must face the problem together, and it is certain that they must be armed with more than the facts of grades really to come to grips with the problem.

CHAPTER VIII

CURRICULAR CHOICES

By his grades you may measure a student's achievement -- but grades may be, as we have seen, a precarious base on which to erect hopes for a fulfilled life after schooling is completed. There are, alas, too many "grinds" loose in the world whose barren lives give the lie to the high grades they made in school. And, contrariwise, can we really count the number of students who "blossom late," who emerge from fallow academic fields into a spiritual and intellectual maturity not vouched for by fair-to-middling grades? It does not follow, of course, that the statistical picture and the picture derived from depth interviews are always contrastive; but they are sufficiently contrastive to compel us to reexamine all our educational beliefs.

In much the same way, the realities of what happens to the curricula which faculty committees and deans labor long to devise so as to provide the best of academic opportunities for practically every kind of student imagineable, tell a markedly different story during the interview. How majors and curricula are chosen in such a way as sometimes to frustrate the best of academic planning is our theme in this chapter. Furthermore, at Brooklyn College, students are advised and never compelled to take specific curricula. One aim of a liberal education is to encourage self-hood, self-choice. In his very choice of major and curriculum, the student is evidencing an education already received. It will be interesting, then, to follow our students through their choice of major and curricula.

The class chosen for this survey entered in the spring of 1953, a time of curricular transition when the so-called "old curriculum" was undergoing re-evaluation. An experimental course of studies known as the "new curriculum" had been set up with a limited number of students admitted in the fall semester serving as guinea pigs. This prevented the inclusion of any of the students in the class under discussion in this experiment. It is quite likely that many of the weaknesses of curricula-planning brought out in our study would not have appeared in the new situation.

The curriculum under which the class of February 1953 studied was not in reality "old." It had been instituted eight years previously as an improvement over a course of study which the college had in the course of time outgrown. There is no doubt that it did represent betterment, for among other things, it strengthened and at the same time broadened the student's major. This was accomplished by instituting an integrated course of studies which consisted of a "functional major" of 30 credits including at least 15 credits in advanced electives in one department, 48 to 71 credits in prescribed courses, and an allowance of from 21 to 43 free electives.

Of interest in this study are not the courses that all students at Brooklyn College are required to complete, but the advanced electives which they choose of their own accord. These, above all, should reveal to what extent the curricular aims of the college were fulfilled -- whether the student "acquired specialized information or competence" and whether his program seemed "intellectually and socially enriching." In other words, an analysis of the choice of electives should show a relationship to the student's individual cultural and vocational aims, and should serve as a valid point of departure for an evaluation of the curriculum.

An ideal program of advanced elective courses includes courses in the field of major concentration, interrelated courses considered part of the "functional major," and free electives. These choices should be moulded into an harmonious program, integrated in accordance with the student's objectives and academic needs, a program in which "overconcentration" in one field as well as "overdiversification" in many fields must be avoided. The accomplishment of this goal may make the selection of a field of study a student's most important curricular decision. In the sophomore year, then, before completing all the courses prescribed by the faculty, the students are required to reach a decision on their major and to plan their course of study. The student is guided in his decision by counselors in the Panel of Curricular Counseling and by departmental advisors, but this assistance does not free him of the responsibility he must assume for his choice. Counselors may assist him in a decision, but in the last analysis, this decision rests with him. Such a compulsion presupposes self-scrutiny on the part of the student, the formulation and testing of values, and an identification of his problem.

A. Choosing a Major

Because of the importance of the student's decision concerning his choice of major and the accountability it entails, curricular elections he makes during the second year at college are not necessarily final. For a variety of reasons, changes are not uncommon. Personal exigencies or whims that compel him to reformulate his plans should therefore be determined by investigation, with the intent of discovering what prompted these changes, and also of seeing in additional light the student's personality and intellectual outlook, Responses to a questionnaire distributed to the students in the class during the senior year revealed such information.

An analysis of the reasons for the students' choice of majors reveals that they were motivated both by humanistic ideals and practical quests for professional and business careers. Basically, idealism seems to have been a motivating force for the majority of women and about 40% of the men. According to the responses of one half of the women, a primary basis for their selection of a major was its provision for "an opportunity of living a fuller life" and "more satisfying human relations," even though "it failed to be as remunerative as some others." An additional group of students (about one quarter of the women and one sixth of the men) claimed that they had chosen their major primarily because of their interest in the quality of the proffered course of study rather than the career for which it might prepare them.

The men's choices, as might be expected, generally revealed a more materialistic attitude toward the curriculum than the women's. The reasons stated by the men related strongly to the prospect of vocational opportunity or concern with the ability to succeed in the chosen field of study, viz., "this major would allow for several vocational patterns, and thus enable me to anticipate changing conditions in future vocational opportunities," "aptitude testing indicated that I was suited for this field," or "I felt that this field promised better paying jobs than others I could have chosen." On the other hand, reasons given by the women reflected a dependence on their quest for security, viz., "this field has always been a subject of interest in may family," "I felt that work in this field while not as remunerative as in many others, would provide a greater measure of security," or "parental pressure was strong in this field." The reason named, seventh in frequency by both men (17%) and women (8%), "the only field left after considering other possibilities," shows a rather negative attitude toward the choice of the major. Only a small minority (2% of the men and 6% of the women), however, "had no particular interests," and chose the field of their major "because it was as good as any," and only about 4% of the men and 7% of the women who responded to the questionnaire made their selections on the basis that their chosen field would not require undergraduate work of a too difficult or time-consuming nature.

A little over one half of the men and about 45% of the women took advantage of the prerogative of changing their majors after the sophomore year. An analysis of the predominant reasons offered by the men students revealed a growth toward maturity as well as a practical outlook on life. About one half of the men admitted they had not "really known what they wanted" or "that they had no adequate conception of the field in which they wished to concentrate" at the time they made their choice. About one-third of the men realized that the major of their first choice did not seem to fit their capabilities because of the difficulty of the requirements and hoped by choosing a more suitable field of concentration to achieve greater success. A few, if they really gave the choice much thought, were unable to explain themselves beyond the bare statement: "it seemed the best bet."

The changes in majors made by the women were motivated by similar reasons. However, about one tenth attributed their change to "parental pressure" and about 15% to "better vocational opportunities" offered by the second selection. Ten per cent frankly admitted that they had simply "not liked the courses" in their first choice.

B. Program Planning

In considering the curricula followed by the students, it is necessary to view them in their totality. An examination of the senior programs alone would shed little light on the students' development, and might possibly give a distorted picture of their achievements in relation to the college's long-term objectives. It is therefore the purpose of this survey to go beyond a cursory examination and to examine complete programs of advanced elective courses, disregarding only prescribed courses common to all programs and courses of an elementary nature taken as free electives. In this connection, it seems important to relate the students' curricula to the framework in which they were formulated, to ascertain whether they carried out the "spirit" as well as the "letter" of the course of study planned by the Long Term Committee of the faculty in 1945.

Every student, as we have already pointed out, at Brooklyn College is compelled to meet the curricular requirements of the college including a core of interrelated courses in a specific field of study known as a "functional major." To assure that each student has faithfully completed these requirements, all programs are carefully scrutinized before graduation in the Office of the Registrar. But, sad to say, a student may have successfully completed the required number of credits in a given major and have taken a number of free electives which may nominally be considered to be part of his functional major without in reality living up to the fundamental principles set up by the faculty.

The functional major was introduced as a means of "integrating elective courses," of bringing about "concentration instead of diffusion in program planning, and also as a means of relating each student's program to his individual needs. A group of electives may, however, be only vaguely related to the courses in the major, yet not in the true sense "integrated" with it. Thus it is possible for a seeming concentration to be achieved with, in some cases, actual diffusion of courses. Such a program would be unlikely to meet the student's entire needs because of its lack of clear purpose.

With this in mind, the programs of the class that entered Brooklyn College in February 1953 have been scrutinized. Each student's choice of advanced electives has been analyzed in relation to his major under the headings, humanities, physical sciences, social sciences, and education, with the purpose of ascertaining whether it carries out the spirit of the curriculum formulated by the faculty. The programs have been measured according to established standards which demand that a functional major be "intellectually and socially enriching," that it "enable the student to understand the place of the particular field in the broader area of human knowledge," and that it be adapted to the student's "abilities, interests, and major purpose in college." A desirable selection of elective courses should reveal "purposefulness" and integration, with sufficient diversification to allow for the young student's broadening cultural and intellectual interests.

In this analysis, the programs of all the graduates of the class that entered in the spring of 1953 were examined with the exception of those of Home Economics, Accounting, and Health and Physical Education majors. The following table is a classification of the graduates according to academic disciplines and concentrations:

Table V

Registration in Academic Disciplines and Departments - February 1957

		Major	Total Number Registered
Total Number of Graduates	419	Humanities	68
Number of Male Graduates	141	Physical and Natural Sciences	74
Number of Female Graduates	278	Social Sciences	111
		Education	148[1]
		Total Included Below	401[2]

Humanities	Men	Women	Sciences	Men	Women	Social Sciences	Men	Women	Education Men	Education Women
Art	3	3	Biology	20	8	Economics	24	7	6	142
English	9	25	Chemistry	29	4	History	9	5		
Modern Lang	3	8	Geology	3	0	Political Science	13	5		
Music	0	1	Mathematics	2	4					
Philosophy	1	2	Physics	4	0	Psychology	6	17		
Speech	3	10				Sociology	3	22		
	19	49		58	16		55	56	6	142

[1] The figure 148 includes 15 women registered in early childhood education, 2 men and 112 women in elementary education, and 4 men and 15 women in secondary education.

[2] Ten students majoring in accounting, 4 in home economics, and 4 in health and physical education are not included.

Curricula of Students Majoring in Humanities

The curricula of students specializing in the humanities should traditionally reflect broad interests in literature, philosophy, and the arts. They might consist of an integrated group of courses in a specific field such as art, literature, or music, and of related courses such as philosophy or history that would serve to deepen and broaden this field. The choice of courses would, however, not necessarily be governed solely by cultural interests. In a utilitarian age, the vocational aim cannot be wholly disregarded, and it is therefore entirely proper that the program of a student specializing in the humanities show a balance between the purposeful and the humanistic.

A study of the programs of six students who majored in art and of one who specialized in music, revealed that at least three of them were balanced more strongly in the direction of the vocational than the humanistic. Pedagogy courses had crowded out courses in related fields with the result that the art students' advanced elective programs consisted almost entirely of art and education courses.

Far better in construction were the programs of the students who had majored in English. They were well-organized, and with few exceptions reflected wide interests in related fields of study. Electives in foreign literatures had been included as a means of expanding the students' literary horizons, and although none of them had been venturesome enough to register in advanced courses in mathematics and science, all but three of the English majors had included courses in political science, ancient, English or American history, psychology and/or sociology.

Most of the English majors' programs revealed vocational aims. Twelve were preparing to teach in the city secondary schools[1], and two intended to enter the field of advertising and publicity. The latter students had constructed appropriately diversified curricula by adding to their concentration in English: electives in design, political science, philosophy of literature, psychology, and/or sociology. The maturity of the English majors who had included pedagogy courses is revealed in the manner in which they judiciously added pedagogy after they had grounded themselves as well as they possibly could in the English major itself and in related courses in literature and the social sciences.

Programs of students majoring in modern languages tended to be overconcentrated. In comparison with the curricula of the English majors, nearly all of whom had included related social science courses, only two modern language programs included history, economics, and/or political science electives.[2] None of the students had taken courses beyond the introductory in psychology and only one of them had registered for a course in sociology.

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[1] In addition to the twelve English majors who minored in pedagogy, four students majoring in Education are included in the discussion. They were in a sense English majors since they had included a concentration of English electives in their programs.

[2] One student included four political science courses taken before the language electives, and in no way related to them.

It is interesting to note that the two programs that came closest to carrying out the faculty concept of a functional major were taken by students with vocational goals. One had been planned by a student preparing to teach.[3] The other had been constructed by an Italian and Spanish major who expected to enter the field of government or business after graduation. He had taken electives in economics (Foreign Trade, Economic Geography of Europe, Resources and Economic Problems of Latin America), in history (The Western Hemisphere and Inter-American Relations), and in political science (Government and Politics in Latin America).

The programs of the three students who majored in philosophy were well integrated and purposeful. In preparation for law, one had taken advanced electives in the field of social science, and the others in the fields of literature, psychology, history, and/or political science.

The thirteen students majoring in speech as compared with English majors seemed somewhat less impelled toward reaching humanistic objectives. The fact that nine of these young people were preparing to become teachers should not, as has been shown previously, have precluded the construction of a well-rounded curriculum. However, only one of these students had, in some measure, been successful in accomplishing this by taking advanced electives in history and sociology, in addition to speech and education concentrations. The rest of the speech-education majors (eight students) had taken fewer elective credits and distributed them mainly among psychology and sociology courses. Only two of the remaining speech curricula reflected wider interests by including literature, political science, psychology, and/or design courses.

Physical and Natural Sciences

The science major represents a problem of long standing to every enlightened science teacher. The problem consists very simply of time: how is it possible for a science major with his heavy burden of long hours in laboratories to choose courses in the humanities or social sciences, no matter how ardently he thirsts for knowledge in the realm of ideas? The typical programs of physical science or mathematics students are almost entirely concentrated within their own fields, and only the exceptional curriculum included advanced electives in the arts or social studies. The tactic of such outstanding technical institutions as MIT in lengthening the four year period of study so as to allow more cultural choices of courses represents one encouraging attack on the problem.

The biology programs, especially the elective curricula of the men, consisted almost entirely of science courses. The typical program was composed of a core of biology courses, elementary physics, and sixteen credits in chemistry. About one quarter of the men had included two or three advanced electives in literature and/or music appreciation. The women's programs differed somewhat from the men's in that one half of them included no advanced chemistry courses. The rest of the women's curricula, however, included two or three chemistry electives, and several non-science courses, in most cases related to their major.

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[3] Three modern language majors were taking pedagogy courses.

The elective curriculum of the typical major in chemistry was even more narrowly confined to the field of physical science. Only one quarter of the chemistry majors included advanced electives in the humanities and social sciences in their curricula, but the programs still reflected wide and divergent interests even though they were limited to the field of physical science.

The elective curricula of geology and physics students, with the exception of three were almost entirely devoted to physical science and mathematics courses.

The tendency to concentrate in the field of physical science was also noted in the programs taken by mathematics majors. With the exception of those preparing to teach, only one mathematics major included more than one advanced elective in the humanities or social sciences. She completed courses in economics (Statistics), philosophy (Logic and Scientific Method), and speech (Extemporaneous Speaking), four of them definitely related to her work in mathematics. The majority of the mathematics majors who minored in education (50% of the mathematics majors) had included two or three advanced electives in the humanities and/or social sciences in their curricula in fulfillment of ancillary education requirements.

Social Sciences

One might expect students majoring in the field of social science to have extensive interests, if for no other reason than their need to accumulate more and more a stock of intellectual assumptions, postulates, and ideas. All of them showed a certain amount of interest in related social science and humanities courses, but none as strong as those in the political science field. With few exceptions, they had included not only advanced electives in economics, and history, but the majority had also completed courses in psychology, literature and speech.

The curricula of the students majoring in economics were marked by a tendency toward a rather strong concentration in the field of specialization, a fair amount of inclusion of related social science courses, and a minimum of studies in the humanities and sciences. About 70% of the programs included advanced electives in sociology, 43% in psychology, 50% in political science, 23% in history, but only 22% in science, art, literature or philosophy.

The students who majored in history might be expected to include more electives in the field of humanities than those who specialized in economics. But this was not the case. Like the economics programs, the majority of the history curricula included related courses in political science and economics; but only a very small percentage included psychology, sociology, literature, or philosophy courses. None of the men's programs included courses in philosophy, and only one third of them took courses in literature, music or speech. One of the women, however, had completed two courses in philosophy (Logic and Symbolic Logic), and all of the women had taken three or more credits in English, French, Hebrew, classical or European literature.

An explanation of the meager interest in the humanities displayed by the history majors through a study of their curricula leads to the supposition that in the cases of 78% of the majors their preparation for pedagogic careers had compelled them to limit their interests to the social sciences and education. This hypothesis was strengthened when the programs of four students who majored in secondary education with the purpose of teaching history were examined. These curricula had the same weaknesses as those of the history majors. They consisted of a concentration in education, 18 to 24 credits in history, three to six credits in political science, and six to nine in economics. None had taken philosophy electives and only one of the education-history majors had taken electives in literature.

It has been mentioned previously that the political science curricula conformed more closely to the liberal tradition than those of history and economics. The programs gave the impression of greater balance because they were not over-concentrated in the field of political science, and because the inter-relationship between the social sciences, literature, and philosophy seemed to have been clearly a matter of concern during program planning. The number of advanced electives in addition to those in the major completed by political science students was larger than average for the class. Their choice of social science courses showed understanding for the requisites of their studies, for about 80% took advanced electives in both psychology and sociology in their programs. The selection of courses in the area of humanities was indicative of their intellectual curiosity. All but two students had taken one or more advanced courses in speech as part of their functional major, 80% had taken one or more classical, English, Oriental, or European literature electives, and one half had completed courses in philosophy.

There was no evidence that any of the political science majors was preparing to teach in the secondary schools. However, three students registered in education should undoubtedly be considered in this discussion, for they had completed from 15 to 21 credits in advanced political science courses. Here also the balance between social sciences and humanities was evident. Unlike the programs of the education-history students, these were not over-concentrated in the major. The best of these curricula included nine credits in history, three in economics, three in philosophy, and nine in European and English literature electives, in addition to a concentration in education and 21 credits in political science.

Although for the purpose of this survey, it was expedient to include psychology, sociology, and anthropology in the area of the social sciences, a study of the curricula of the students majoring in these fields leaves one with the impression that they are in reality a class by themselves. The psychology and sociology-anthropology programs are furthermore so similar that it seems fitting not to discuss them separately. Few students in both disciplines included electives in economics, history or political science, but in nearly all, the advanced electives were devoted entirely to psychology, sociology, anthropology, and/or literature courses. These students would seem, therefore, to be somewhat in a professional strait-jacket; their electives are really "more of the same." From a narrow point of view, they are gaining the entrance requirements, so to speak, into their profession. But it seems doubtful without the leaven of more philosophy, social science, and art in the lump of sociology and psychology that they are well qualified to grow into thoughtful commentators on the complexities of our modern civilization.

Education

About 40% of the class under discussion was registered in the department of education in preparation for a pedagogic career. The greatest number of these had set as their goal teaching in the lower schools, in pre-elementary or elementary grades, and only a small minority (14% of the majors in education) was planning to teach in a field of specialization in the secondary schools. Prospective elementary school teachers do not take courses in a specific subject matter other than pedagogy as do prospective high school teachers who elect a score of advanced courses in a specific subject matter in addition to pedagogy. Necessarily, therefore, the two groups approach the problem of curricular shoices along different avenues. In fact, the prospective elementary school teacher who manages somehow or other to elect subject matter courses at once stands out because of this fact.

The programs of the students who specialized in the field of early childhood education (about 10% of the education majors) can best be described as stereotyped. The department prescriptions which included only 31 credits should have afforded the students some opportunity for originality in the choice of electives. With the exception of four students who had concentrated in a group of courses of special interest to them, however, they had all followed the same pattern in constructing their programs.

The average education student took about eight advanced electives distributed in the following fields of study: psychology, sociology, home economics, classics, world literature, English and speech. The choice of these electives was limited and unimaginative, dominated by vocational needs not humanistic interests. The majority of the students registered for a "useful" course like "Children's Literature," popular courses of a general nature, and so-called easy courses. For this they may not have been entirely to blame since the arrangement of practice teaching hours has been known to control their choice of programs. Be that as it may, the resultant curricula were unrepresentative of liberal educational standards.

Measured by the curricular standards set by the faculty, the 116 students who specialized in elementary school education had all fulfilled the college requirements. By majoring in an approved field of study, by taking a group of related elective courses, they had also met their own needs and achieved a worthy vocational goal. They had acquired "specialized information" and, it is hoped, "competence in the field" of pedagogy; but whether their choice of courses had served "to enrich them intellectually and socially" is a moot question. Surely, a teacher who has increased his intellectual stature will pass on to his students his excellence. The underlying questions, then, are: do we know what we are achieving, are we achieving what we have set out to achieve?

An analysis of the curricula of students specializing in elementary education might, indeed, lead one to believe that the course of study at Brooklyn College was very limited. The majority of the programs included about seven advanced electives besides the required education courses. In 70% of the programs, the choice of electives was limited to *Psychology of Personality*, *Abnormal Psychology*, *The Family*, *Criminology*, *Childhood Literature*, and *North European Literature*.

Only about 30% of the elementary education programs deviated from this pattern. In these programs, personal interests and a desire for intellecutal enrichment beyond the bare requirements were evident. They all included a second field of study consisting of from 12 to 15 credits to complement the required education courses.

The minority that had chosen to deviate from the pattern of courses chosen by the elementary education majors proves that the pursuit of a vocational goal need not prevent a thoughtful student from developing his academic interests. There is no question that education courses are important and necessary as a preparation for teaching. But education courses alone are not sufficient, and a group of electives chosen as "fill-ins" without intellectual purpose will not prepare a young student adequately to meet the need of a pedagogic career. "He teacheth best who knoweth his subject matter best." When the teachers of the subject matter courses concede that no pedagogy course ever ruined a good teacher, perhaps the educationists will go and do likewise and concede that no subject matter course ever ruined a good teacher.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

American students of the present decade have been characterized as members of the "Lonely Crowd," a "silent generation" of "gloriously contented self-seekers on the American assembly-line." It would appear, then, that one and the same time, they have been deplored as conformists in dread of being at variance with the herd, and also of being blatantly individualistic, "supremely confident that their destinies lie within their own control rather than in external circumstances." So if we are to believe various commentators, they are simultaneously lacking in ego-drive and being driven by egotism. This ill-assorted combination of outward harmony and inner ruthlessness and egotism might be seen as a combustible mixture or unstable equilibrium in which either element may gain supremacy.

This characterization may well be a true one. Change is constant, and the "silent" is already giving way to the "beat" generation of "angry young men," "innocent nihilists adrift in Squaresville,"[1] rebels against traditional values and conventional form. It must be borne in mind, however, that basically the "silent" generation and the "San Francisco Group" are not antithetical. They are alike in that they are both conformists and in that they both express the same impulse "to wash their hands of the world of affairs and to concentrate on love, friendship, and self."[2] They are apathetic as far as the public world is concerned and deeply involved in themselves and their personal relations.

How very different is the Brooklyn College student from his contemporaries as they have been described in their dualistic complexity? The temptation is strong to characterize the Brooklyn College student as a stereotype, created by a unique set of home, urban, cultural, ethnic, and economic influences. All of this is true, but the overarching conclusion toward which our study has impelled us is not the difference or uniqueness of the Brooklyn College student but his basic similarity to his college contemporaries taken across the broad land. The values of the Brooklyn College student are those held by the majority of college students throughout the country. Their successes in making responses to the challenge of education sufficiently viable to lead them to the good life after college are neither greater nor less than those of students everywhere.

This was brought to mind by a thought-provoking editorial that appeared in the Brooklyn College Kingsman in February 1957. It was an attempt by a youthful journalist to analyze his college generation, and it took the form of a protest against their "conformity," their "lack of intellectual courage," their "self-centered interest in their own material welfare," their "pretense at an interest in worldly and scholarly matters," and "their desire to be followers instead of leaders." The article finally included an expression of romantic regret at having to live in an age of "economic prosperity."

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[1] Eugene Burdeck, "The Innocent Nihilists Adrift in Squaresville," The Reporter (April 3, 1958), pp. 30 ff.

[2] Norman Podhoretz, "Where Is the Beat Generation Going?", Esquire (December, 1958), p. 148.

Are not the values which the student-editorialist decried as failings common to his contemporaries in college throughout the United States? Philip E. Jacob, in summarizing the values of American college students has described the current generation as "gloriously contented in regard to their present day to day activity and their outlook for the future" and as "unabashedly self-centered in aspiring to material gratifications for themselves and their families."[3] This individualistic self-centeredness is, indeed, unlike that of the pioneer, and must, therefore, in the case of the modern college student, be construed not as an attribute of leadership, but as of a "rigid and stereotyped outlook on life."[4]

The fact that Brooklyn College students in this study conformed to rather similar social patterns is prescribed not so much by their campus experiences as by their economic and ethnic status. Going to college did not necessarily mean a breach with family authority, acclimatization to a new environment, and exposure to conflicting ideologies and new patterns of life. It is, of course, true that most of the students did free themselves somewhat from parental control, and that in many instances these young people did deviate from the hereditary pattern of values. But this was hardly noticeable; the new set of values which they now accepted were common to their contemporaries who in turn were products of similar backgrounds and corresponding sentiments.

According to the findings of this study, the students in the class spent their leisure time similarly, held part-time positions to defray social and educational expenses, dated and eventually married in their own social spheres. Their self-interest was manifested in all their activities even in their attendance at "houseplan" groups and social clubs connected with religious and philanthropic organizations: to get as much as possible out of them, and to give them up when this had been accomplished. Their social interests rarely broadened into concern for community problems. The choice of a life vocation was of extreme importance to them, and it was mainly selected on the basis of the future security and comfort it would provide; in choosing a career their type of individualism did not permit gambling on the unexplored morrow, nor did the need for unusual personal aggrandizement play an important role.

The complacency of the average student interviewed in this survey was not limited to his social and economic attitudes. Its more serious manifestations came to light in his intellectual and scholastic positions. The students' aims in coming to Brooklyn College were primarily pragmatic, a matter of conforming to what was expected of them by their families and social status, and for personal advancement. Their choice of courses was frequently dominated by an intense interest in the importance of grades rather than by thought-provoking content. Even in scholastically superior students, there was evident a streak of opportunism and deference to grades as a means of achieving their goals.

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[3] Philip E. Jacob, Changing Values in College, 1957, p. 1.

[4] Ibid, p. 10.

In some fields of study, their choice of a curriculum showed signs of over-conformity to a general pattern and of living up to the minimal requirements that would achieve for them vocational security. In the majority of cases, there was little trace of the "recklessness" of the truly inquiring mind in search of ultimate truths.

It was deplorable that many students seemed unawakened to the need of thinking for themselves. Education for them was a matter of receiving information, of taking down and memorizing notes, of being under the constant surveillance of instructors and counselors. This disregard for the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake is illustrated in their reading habits. Few of the students had become accustomed to spending part of their leisure time in reading anything except best sellers and periodicals, and these only occasionally when "they found the time" to do so, less frequently, if statistics prove true, than at the time of their admission to Brooklyn College.

In his intellectual attitudes, the student in the class under discussion resembled his national contemporary. Professor Jacob describes students as "wanting some one to give them directions" which they can passively copy into their notebooks.[5] The teacher's primary function is to make them comfortable "as they go through the learning aid of college, and for those with 'brains' to titillate their minds."[6] Students cast the ideal teacher in the role "of a psychiatric baby-sitter," and "look to him to increase their "self-assurance, self-respect, self-enjoyment, and possibly self-knowledge."[7]

Does it suffice, however, to describe this prevalent American college situation without looking into its background? If the student is a complacent conformist, is he perhaps the product of "progressive education" which, by its methods, "focused the teacher's attention on more facets of the child than his intellectual abilities?"[8] The instructor's role, according to Riesman, was that of director, guiding "the other-directed child to take his place in a society where the concern of the group is less what it produces than with its internal group relations, its morale."[9] The students in our group, educated according to these theories, were well aware of the importance of cooperating successfully with their peers and superiors, even at the cost of sacrificing individual skills and proclivities; but unless they were fortunate enough to fall under stimulating influences, their intellectuality remained undeveloped.

Our group displayed many admirable qualities: an understanding of human relations, a willingness to assume responsibility, a fearlessness in facing the future. Perhaps it was that very self-centeredness and ability to conform to circumstances that enabled these young people to reach social maturity so early in life. They were unwilling to take needless risks, to defy fate, but they were ready to accept the inevitable and to make the best of what life offered them. It takes courage to face life without recklessness, to believe in one's ability to achieve security in an atomic age filled with inherent political and economic fears.

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[5] Ibid., p. 80.

[6] Ibid., p. 81.

[7] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[8] David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd (abridged edition, Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p. 79.

[9] Ibid., p. 85.

It is difficult to measure exactly what the students in the class under discussion gained from their college education. "Getting older" did make the difference, and a growing sense of responsibility may have found its impetus not at the Brooklyn College campus, but in the home, in personal relationships, religious experiences, or economic pressures. It was through his college studies and contacts, however, that the student's personality was crystalized and his world of ideas transformed. The students that Professor Jacobs describes as having "a set of mind so rigid that they are incapable of understanding new ideas and of accepting educational implications which run counter to their preconceptions"[10] are in the minority at Brooklyn College. The replies to the questionnaires and interviews left the impression that their "stereotyped" attitudes were more often the result of "unawakened intellectuality" than of a "compulsive reliance on authority." The majority of the students desired to broaden their intellectual horizons, and often placed the blame for their failure to develop more fully on their instructors and their courses.

A strong vocational orientation, such as one finds at Brooklyn College, might in many liberal arts institutions bring about a "conflict of values between the student and the college."[11] The pragmatically oriented "student has been known to fight back at his education -- expressing bitter resentment against his 'impractical' courses as a waste of time."[12] This was not the case at Brooklyn College. The values at college were not "so foreign that they could not realistically assess their academic performance."[13] College did not represent a sharp cleavage with the student's pre-college existence. It was almost like a "continuation of high school." He did not come in conflict with liberal education because his pragmatism was accepted at Brooklyn College, and general education had even been modified to meet his vocational needs. Why else would one find the greatest conformity and self-satisfaction among those students who were preparing to teach?

Many student problems have presented themselves in the course of this study of the class that entered in 1953. Some are insoluble or not within the scope of the college to resolve -- adversity, crowded homes, psychological disorders, family conflicts. Through remedial reading, remedial English, and speech clinics, personnel and curricular counselors constantly seek to ameliorate the many scholastic difficulties that confront the freshman. In addition, plans have been inaugurated under an "advanced placement policy" to aid gifted students to bridge the transition between high school and college. The large rate of college attrition warrants careful study with the hope that a more careful and sympathetic screening of reasons for "drop-outs" might lead to means of salvaging students able to carry on successfully at college.

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[10] Jacob, op. cit., p. 10.

[11] Ibid., p. 119.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

The students took for granted the right to carry on part-time employment while attending Brooklyn College, yet resented the implication of the "subway college" label. They expressed regret that the "size" of the institution prevented closer faculty-student relations. But would it not be proper to consider the other side of the question? Instructors willing to give their time to conferences with their students, all too frequently get such responses as: "But I am sorry, I can't meet with you. I must be at my job in Manhattan at one o'clock every day."

The most crucial problems that arose from this study, however, are connected with the conduct of courses and its relation to the goals of Brooklyn College. Basic for this discussion is the seeming disparity between the stated aims and the methods of carrying them out. One of the purposes of the college curriculum is to promote the students' capacities for critical and independent thinking. Yet repeatedly, American colleges (Brooklyn included) have been accused of spoon-feeding the students, of arranging the "minutiae" of their programs.[14] According to Newsweek, the colleges are "mass producers of a conveyer-belt brand of education, with an accompanying emphasis on how to get a degree quickly and easily rather than on what can be learned and taught."[15]

These accusations may present the situation in its darkest light. But did not the responses to the questionnaires and interviews in this survey show that in most courses it was unnecessary for a student to display independent judgment, that he could get by successfully if he was an assiduous notetaker? Students were aware of overlapping courses, were bored by them, yet continued to register for courses in which readings and even visual aids were repetitious. They rushed through college frequently collecting credits in two or three summer schools in one summer. What difference did it make if these were courses in which they were not interested? Graduation would be hastened, the necessary position could be obtained, the marriage date hastened. In order to avoid the stigma of "spoonfeeding" and of "assembly-line methods," course standards should be raised to demand more independent work on the part of the student, and correct written English should be the concern of all departments of the college.

The most sweeping criticism of the liberal arts college, however, was recently expressed by Paul Woodring: "If one goes to the colleges today looking for the liberal arts point of view, he looks in vain. There is no such view which is held by all, or even a majority of the faculty, the students, or the governing boards. There are many points of view all leading to the same degree."[16]

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[14] Charles Frankel, "Our Colleges - Inside View of Outsider," New York Times Magazine Section, VI, February 24, 1957, p. 23.

[15] Newsweek, Special Education Report, "Scramble for a Degree," January 11, 1957.

[16] Paul Woodring, A Fourth of a Nation (1957), p. 45.

Brooklyn College's recognition of the pragmatic orientation of its student body mas been mentioned; the study of the elective programs of the students in the class, however, showed the liberal arts aim had not been entirely submerged. But Paul Woodring would, I believe, be sharply critical of the advanced elective curricula of elementary education majors. Here liberal education was not "sharply divorced from the vocational and other forms of specialized education." Liberal education had become involved in "practical and mundane considerations" which made it impossible for it "to discharge its duties."[17]

According to these statements, a large percentage of the class (majors in elementary education, in accounting, home economics, and physical education)[18] had not had a true liberal education. It was pointed out previously that the prospective teacher should increase his own intellectual stature in order to stimulate the students in the learning process; every prospective teacher should himself include in his course of study a second major other than education. Woodring's plan for teacher education appears to offer an ideal solution. He recommends that "the education of teachers for all levels and all subjects should include four years of non-specialized liberal or general education."[19]

A profile of a college generation has been depicted, but even now it is changing. The "beat" are already replacing the "silent" in the news annals of the day. What are the possibilities ten years hence? The facial features of the Brooklyn College student are bound to change, perhaps to become unrecognizable if one places faith in projected population statistics. A municipal college which is entirely dependent on the city and more specifically on the borough in which it is situated for its student personnel must feel the impetus of the movements of its population. The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies recently published statistics that predict the gradual displacement of Jewish by Negro and Puerto Rican groups in the borough of Brooklyn.[20] Such changes might present new personnel problems, and together with the predicted "bulge" in college enrollment demand new approaches to academic problems. On the other hand, "plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose." Nothing basic may change. Our problems perhaps will remain the same.

"The Colleges are Preparing for an Invasion of War Babies," reads a headline.[21] The projections of future college enrollment point up this national problem. It is predicted that the percentage of the group of eighteen to twenty-one year olds attending college will rise from 32.1% in 1955 to 44% in 1966 and to 50% in 1971.[22] A free society prides itself in offering equality of opportunity to all its citizens, and is therefore obligated to provide education for all. In 1970, therefore, the college may be faced with the problem of educating more than three times as many young people as before the Second World War. How can the recommendations for the improvement of the curriculum, for increased independent and critical study be carried out under such conditions? A recommendation "to teach a few people exceedingly well and to teach a great number of people less well"[23] might serve as a good solution. If colleges can provide different programs for different types and levels of ability, it may be possible to solve the problem of mass education in the future. Brooklyn College is well on the way in carrying out such a policy. Students with outstanding ability are receiving special attention. Here it is hoped they will apply their fundamental knowledge and skills and be motivated to full self-development.

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[17] _Ibid._, p. 41.

[18] Accounting, home economics and physical education curricula were not analyzed since they were mainly fixed and involved very few students.

[19] Woodring, _op. cit._, p. 233.

[20] Report of Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, _op. cit._, "Student Backgrounds."

[21] _Time_, "Education," February 4, 1957.

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[22] Benjamin Fine, "Education in Review," New York Times, April 28, 1957.

[23] Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Pursuit of Excellence in Education, 1958, passim.